

Guidance & Resources for Directors & Boards

Created by Southern Tier Library System



- Staff COVID Exposures
- Closing Considerations
- Cluster Action Initiative
- Pandemic Operations Plan
- Board Meetings

Issued: 10/14/2020

Updated: 10/26/2020

Library Staff COVID Exposures

New York State Department of Health provides clear guidance on how to address staff exposures.

<https://hcr.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/contacts-of-contacts-guidance-doh.pdf>

Terms Defined:

Proximate Contact: being in the same enclosed environment (such as a classroom, office, or gathering) but greater than 6 ft from a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or someone who has tested positive. If you are nearer than 6 ft, it is for a cumulative total of fewer than 15-minutes.

Close Contact: being within 6 ft of a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or someone who has tested positive for fifteen minutes or more during a 24-hour period. This cumulative fifteen minute total can include three 5-minute exposures, fifteen 1-minute exposures, etc.

Basic Steps for Addressing Exposure – Proximate Contact with someone who tested positive for COVID:

Step #1: Ask employee to stay home, quarantine for 14-days, and monitor symptoms, or get tested and stay home until test results are confirmed.

Step #2: Check-in with employee throughout 14-day quarantine to assess symptoms/learn test results.

Step #3: Allow employee to return to work if no symptoms or other irregular health conditions were observed during 14-day quarantine or if test results are negative.

Basic Steps for Addressing Exposure – Close Contact with someone who tested positive for COVID:

Step #1: Ask employee to get tested **and** stay home for a 14-day quarantine period.

Step #2: Wait until the end of the 14-day quarantine period. After the quarantine period ends, allow employee to return to work if test results are negative. If test results are positive, continue to quarantine until a negative test result is received.

Contact of a Contact (Secondary Contact) – Employee reports contact with a *Proximate* or *Close Contact* of a Case.

An employee does not need to quarantine for 14-days or get tested if they report they have come in contact with someone who has had *Proximate* or *Close Contact*.

Employers may take extra precautions to ask the employee to self-quarantine for a few days until additional information is revealed (such as a test result for the *Proximate* or *Close Contact*), but that is at the discretion of the employer.

Informing Others:

Employers do not need to inform other library staff or the local health department of *Proximate* **or** *Close Contact* exposures so long as the employee (*Contact of a Case*) is cleared to return to work.

If the exposed employee (*Contact of a Case*) tests positive for COVID, employers must inform other library staff who had *Proximate* or *Close Contact* *as soon as possible*, and follow the same **Basic Steps for Addressing Exposure** for each exposed employee. The employer must also report the employee's name who tested positive to the local health department to assist with *Contact Tracing*.

Closing Considerations

Steps for addressing Library Staff Exposures is based on information provided by the NYS Department of Health, which is intended for broad audiences across fields and industries. It does not specifically deal with the uniqueness of small staffing levels at rural libraries.

Library boards and directors have a heightened responsibility of keeping staff and volunteers healthy during this time. A single *Contact of a Case* employee could prohibit a library from offering services for several weeks if most library staff were exposed to that single employee.

Similar to school districts, libraries should consider *Temporary Closures* in the event an employee is exposed or tests positive. A *Temporary Closure* will allow the library to put

operations on pause, so directors can calmly work with their board to determine if the exposed employee (*Contact of a Case*) put other staff at risk. And, who is able to work or who should quarantine based on information from the exposed employee's situation.

Temporary Closures would last however long it takes to determine who on staff can safely return to work without exposing others, while also taking into account appropriate staffing levels.

Although *Temporary Closures* might impose an inconvenience to patrons, most community members will respect the decision-making of the library to protect the wellbeing of staff and residents.

**Actions for Temporarily Closed Libraries:
STLS Delivery, ILS Options, Consultant & IT Visits**

Report all temporary library closures to Resource Consultant Lyndsie Guy (<mailto:guyl@stls.org>) as soon as possible. Update your outgoing voicemail message and provide explanatory signage on building entrances and social media to communicate closures to your community. Once the library has a reopen date, notify Lyndsie again (<mailto:guyl@stls.org>).

STLS will continue to deliver library materials to *Temporarily Closed* members, but drivers will not pick up outgoing deliveries while the library is closed. Member libraries are encouraged to close Book Drops during Temporary Closures.

If you anticipate your library will be closed for more than 96 hours, please use the [Help Desk](#) (or email request to STLSlibraryhelp@stls.org) let STLS ILS/IT staff know. If you or a staff member is able, update the Library Calendar in WorkFlows to reflect your expected closed dates. This will prevent holds from attaching to your items during the closure. STLS staff can do this for you, if necessary. We can also suspend the email notification of holds, and other notices and/or send out a bulk email announcement (supplied by your library) to your patrons with information about the closure. Extending due dates is another WorkFlows option during a closure.

STLS Consultants and IT Staff will suspend visits to member libraries until the library director can confirm with STLS' Executive Director the current and healthy status of staff. Members are encouraged to still communicate with STLS staff by email and phone, and submit IT issues through the Help Desk or by Calling x528.

NYS Cluster Action Initiative

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-cluster-action-initiative>

On October 6, 2020 Governor Cuomo announced this new approach to identifying the feasibility of operating under NYS Forward Phase IV. The initiative is in response to recent surges in COVID cases within specific communities across the state.

Libraries are not specifically referenced, but we can assume they are categorized as Non-Essential Business - Retail. Directors and boards should be cognizant of their community's status relative to this initiative. STLS will also monitor, and notify members when their community is escalated to a specific "Zone", and recommend the types of services they should or should not be offering based on "Zone" restrictions.

Complete information on the Cluster Zone Initiative can be found at <https://forward.ny.gov/cluster-action-initiative> and <https://esd.ny.gov/ny-cluster-action-initiative-guidance>

The new rules are in effect for a minimum of 14 days.

The initiative is composed of three steps:

1. Reduce in-person activities and interactions within the cluster, similar to *New York on PAUSE*;
2. Take action in the area surrounding the cluster to stop the spread; and
3. Take precautionary action in the outlying communities.

Zone Guidance

- **Yellow (Precautionary Zone)**– Permitted services that can be offered include curbside or lobby service, access to circulation desk, access to public computers in limited time amounts and in physically distanced space, access to stacks, limited access to tables and seating, limited access to restrooms, small meetings and remote services. Libraries should consider no more than a total of 25 people in the building at one time (this includes a combination of BOTH patrons and staff). These are the highest forms of library service that may be considered when a library is located in a yellow zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering any or all of these services at this time, due to building occupancy restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote services only. Staff should keep a count of the number of people in the building at all times, so as

to not exceed recommended limits. Public computers, surfaces, hardware, and restrooms must be cleaned regularly.

- **Orange (Warning Zone)**– Curbside or Lobby service, limited access to circulation desk, limited access to public computers (restricted by appointment and in limited amounts of time) and remote services are the highest forms of service that may be considered when a library is in the orange zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering any or all of these services at this time, due to building occupancy restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote services only. No more than 10 people should be in the library building at one time (this includes a total combined number of BOTH patrons and staff). Staff should keep a count of the number of people in the building at all times, so as to not exceed the limit. Public computers, surfaces, door handles, etc. must be wiped clean after each use.
- **Red Zone (Cluster Itself)** – The library building is closed to the public. Curbside or remote services are the only services allowed. Only one library staff member can be in the building at any point in time to facilitate curbside service. All other staff would work remotely. Curbside service is the highest form of in-person service that can be offered when a library is in the red zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering curbside service at this time, due to the staffing restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote services only.

	Curbside or Lobby Service	Access to Circ Desk	Access to Public Computers	Access to Stacks	Access to Tables/ Seating	Access to Rest Rooms	Meetings Allowed	Onsite Programs	Remote Services	Notes
Yellow	YES	YES	YES*	YES*	YES*	YES*	YES*	YES*	YES	Total of 25 people in building
Orange	YES	YES	YES*	YES*	YES*	NO	NO	NO	YES	Total of 10 people in building
Red	CURBSIDE ONLY	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	One employee at a time only

* Staff should monitor to limit the amount of people AND to clean surfaces and computers after each patron.

You can check what zone your library is currently in, here:

<https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov/#/home>

Please note that it may take up to 24 hours for this Hotspot Lookup site to be updated with the most current address information.

Libraries can also track up-to-date cases by visiting Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 US Cases by County/State interactive map:

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>

Pandemic Operations Plan

New legislation signed into law by Governor Cuomo requires all New York State public employers to adopt a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. This [new legislation](#) will constitute New York State Labor Law Section 27-c.

Such a plan must be finalized and published by April 1, 2021 for all school, municipal, and special district libraries. At this time, association libraries are not required to submit such a plan but are encouraged to develop one as a best practice. It is possible for libraries to pair the Pandemic Operations Plan with an existing Disaster Preparedness Plan by expanding the existing plan to include the components outlined below.

Pandemic Operations Plans must include the following components:

1. A list and description of all positions and titles considered essential in the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce, and the justification for classifying each position as essential;
2. Protocols the employer will follow in order to enable non-essential employees to telecommute or work remotely, including plans to obtain any needed devices or technology such as software, office laptops or cell phones, and the transferring of office phone lines to work or personal cell phones as practicable or applicable to the workplace;
3. A plan describing how the employer will, to the extent possible, stagger work shifts of essential employees and contractors in order to reduce overcrowding on public transportation and at work sites;
4. A description of the protocol the employer will implement to obtain necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for essential employees and contractors, based upon the various tasks and needs of such employees, in a quantity sufficient to provide at least two pieces of each type of PPE to each essential employee and contractor during any

given work shift over at least a six-month period of time. PPE includes: “all equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards, including gloves, masks, face shields, foot and eye protection, protective hearing devices, respirators, hard hats and disposable gowns and aprons”;

5. A description of the protocol outlining what happens in the event an employee or contractor is exposed to the communicable disease, exhibits symptoms or tests positive for such disease, in order to prevent the spread or contraction of such disease in the workplace, including policies regarding the disinfection of the workplace and available leave for employees;
6. Policies for documenting hours and work locations for essential employees and contractors to aid in tracking the disease; and
7. A protocol for how the public employer will work with the locality to identify sites for emergency housing for essential employees.

The New York Library Association has created a simplified checklist with definitions and requirements available here:

https://www.nyla.org/userfiles/uploads/Chapter_168_Requirements.pdf?utm_source=ALL+NYLA&utm_campaign=7896ca2580-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_10_22_07_40&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1a8613b33e-7896ca2580-92899167

Once finalized, the plan must be posted in a clear and visible location and published in the employee handbook, if the employer provides such a handbook. The plan must also be accessible either on the employer’s website or on the internet in a place available for employees to access.

Board Meetings

Executive Orders have extended virtual board meetings until November 3, 2020. Given the recent month-to-month updates to this Executive Order, we can assume board meetings can take place online until the end of the COVID pandemic. STLS will update members if for some reason the Executive Order does not get updated, and boards are legally required to meet in person.

During this time library directors, staff, and community members are relying on trustees to make decisions about library operations. It is important for library boards to meet, but also be mindful of trustee health and safety.

Boards can meet in person at this time because we are in Phase IV of NYS Forward. However, boards must meet in a way that adheres to pandemic protocol:

1. Everyone in attendance wears a face mask
2. Social distance - seating allows for all attendees to observe six feet of distance
3. Hand sanitizer available for attendees
4. Sanitizing wipes available for wiping down shared spaces or surfaces
5. Meetings are held in public place that allow members of the public to attend and social distance

If you cannot adhere to these guidelines, trustees should continue to host virtual meetings. The Governor has extended Executive Orders to allow virtual public meetings at this time.

Here you will find some guidance from WNYLRC's *Ask the Lawyer* service on how library boards can meet remotely, make timely decisions and legally observe Open Meetings Law:

<https://www.wnylrc.org/ask-the-lawyer/raqs/120>

Some highlights from this guidance indicate boards can observe the following changes during New York State's quarantine:

1. Board meetings do not need to take place in a physical space where trustees meet, and the general public has access to observe.
2. Board meetings can take place remotely (phone conference call or online meeting platform).
3. Board meetings shall be made available to the general public online in real time (live) through the library's website.

Libraries might meet this requirement by posting somewhere on their website (Home, About Us or Board of Trustees page) how the public can obtain call-in information to attend a live board meeting.

An example statement might read, "The Public Library Board of Trustees will conduct their regular monthly meeting on Month/Day/Year/Time via Zoom as the library is presently observing NYS quarantine guidance. Please email us at: library@stls.org to obtain meeting call-in information to attend board meeting proceedings in real time."

Libraries should avoid posting call-in information or live meeting recordings to their social media pages or websites to minimize security and digital space concerns.

4. Minutes of proceedings shall be made available at a later date on the library's website (these can be posted where the library posts all other previous meeting documents). At this time, libraries should just be posting meeting minutes to their website; not recordings.

5. The library shall publicly post when meetings will take place, and where to obtain meeting call-in information to attend a live board meeting. (Postings can be on the library's main entrance, book drop, website and via press release).

Resources for hosting live recorded online board meetings:

1. Zoom - <https://zoom.us/pricing>
2. Webex - <https://www.webex.com/pricing/index.html>
3. GoToMeeting - <https://www.gotomeeting.com/>

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(Original: 10/16/2020; Revised: 10/26/2020)*