**STLS**
Southern Tier Library System
*Connecting Community Libraries*

## Library Staff 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 gatherings but greater than 6 ft from a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or someone who has tested positive.

*Close Contact*: being within 6 ft of a person displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or someone who has tested positive.

*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, 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 **or** learn test results.

Step #3: Allow employee to return to work if no symptoms or other 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 until test results are confirmed.

Step #2: Learn test results*.* 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 someone who came in 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* with someone who tested positive. 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 of the *Proximate* or *Close Contact)*, but that should be at the discretion of the employer.

***Informing Others:***

Employers <u>do not</u> need to inform other library staff or the county 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 county 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* might last 24 – 96 hours depending on the length of time it takes to get test results of an exposed employee (*Contact of a Case*), or the results of the person who potentially exposed an employee (*Contact of a Contact*).

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](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](mailto:guyl@stls.org)).

STLS will continue to deliver library materials to *Temporarily Closed* members, but drivers will not pick up outgoing deliveries while 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](mailto: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 health 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://esd.ny.gov/ny-cluster-action-initiative-guidance](https://esd.ny.gov/ny-cluster-action-initiative-guidance)

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. And in anticipation of increased cases during fall and winter months.

Libraries are not specifically referenced, but we can assume they are categorized as Business/Retail – Non- Essential. Libraries should be cognizant of their community's status relative to this initiative, and what services they can or cannot offer.  STLS will monitor regionally and provide updates as needed.

Libraries can check their community's "Zone" status by clicking the following link and entering the library's physical address.

[https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov/#/home](https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov/#/home)

### 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/

*Authored:* *L. Guy, A. Fleming & B. Hildreth (10.14.2020)*