

G.A.R. Memorial Library Epidemic and Health Emergency Policy

Purpose: To establish policies that will be used in the event of an epidemic or library health emergency.

Background: 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 requested or required by Essex County public health officials, among others, to take measures to help slow the spread of illness. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the library can be maintained with limited staff and reduced hours as determined, on a case-by-case basis, by the Library Director.

This policy differs from a general emergency preparedness policy or procedure. With a general 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). However, 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.

Definitions:

- **Epidemic** – A disease that may be spreading among or affecting many persons in a specific locality at the same time. This may include a locality where the disease is not yet prevalent.
- **Library health emergency** – A situation in which there are not enough healthy library staff to maintain normal hours of operation and levels of service. For the G.A.R. Library and as set forth, this is 3 staff during normal operations and 2 staff during curbside pickup only.
- **Minimum Staffing Level** -- Minimum staffing level is defined as: (a) three healthy staff available to be present at the library during normal operations for all open hours, with a maximum 8-hour workday; and (b) 2 healthy staff available during curbside pickup only, with a maximum 8-hour workday.
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Library Closure or Reduced Services: The G.A.R. Memorial Library may temporarily close because of an epidemic or library health emergency in the event that either of the following occur:

- The Town of West Newbury offices close because of an epidemic or health emergency.
- A mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by Essex County public health or other government officials.
- A Library staff member is diagnosed with the disease.

- The Page School or Pentucket Regional School District close due to the epidemic or health emergency.

At the discretion of the Library Director, the G.A.R. Memorial Library may temporarily close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services in the event that: (a) minimal staffing levels cannot be maintained; or (b) there is otherwise insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels.

An inability to maintain minimal staffing levels will result in reduced hours, services or closing the library. At the library director's discretion, this may include:

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

In the event of closure, 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 to the extent feasible and safe.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the Town of West Newbury Personnel Policy. In the event of closure requiring library employees to be sent home, those employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

Communication: In the event of a closure, reduced hours or services, the Library Director or designee will maintain communication with staff, Library Board of Trustees and the Town Manager. Staff should follow the normal procedure used for any unexpected closure/program cancellation, which includes posting on social media, email blasts, and the library website.

Prioritization of Services: If reduced staffing, hours, or services are required and unless otherwise determined by the Library Director, employees shall give priority to responsibilities that most directly impact patrons prior to any other tasks, subject to the safety of patrons and staff.

In general, staff shall provide services in the following order:

- Direct patron assistance, e.g., check out, issuing library cards, computer and information assistance.
- Processing incoming holds, check-ins, incoming delivery returns, shelving.
- All other clerical and administrative functions.

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

Employee Absences: The Town of West Newbury Personnel Policy outlines the sick leave policy applicable to Library staff. This policy shall continue to be followed in the event of an epidemic or library health emergency.

If an employee receives medical direction to quarantine and is confined to home, they will notify the Library Director and will be excused from reporting to work without cost to their sick leave. If they are able to work remotely, they can continue to perform job responsibilities as assigned by the Library Director.

In the event of a library closure or a quarantine ordered by a doctor or health authority, all employees will work their regularly scheduled hours remotely, under the direction of their supervisor, and shall be compensated for those hours worked.

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 will be held by the most senior staff member available. This designee will make necessary decisions only after consulting first, with the Library Board of Trustees Chairperson, if that person is not available, the Library Board of Trustees Vice-Chairperson, and finally, the West Newbury Town Manager.

Adopted by Library Board of Trustees on October 13, 2020.