



From the State Library - March 27, 2020

COVID-19 and Libraries: Iowa Library Closure Information



Iowa Library Closures

The State Library is collecting information from Iowa libraries on closures due to the COVID-19 crisis. The information will be used in several ways:

- To determine when IA Shares delivery service may need to be suspended statewide.
- To inform the State Library on the best way to communicate to libraries during the crisis.
- To present data to the Governor's Office and other leaders to inform their decision-making processes.

[Report a Closure or View List of Library Closures](#)

Governor's Guidance on Closing

The State Library previously sought clarification from the Governor's Office concerning the March 17 State Public Health Emergency Declaration and how it applies to library closures. This is the statement we received at the time:

"The Governor's [Public Health Disaster Declaration](#) does not require libraries to close. If libraries stay open, they should follow social distancing guidelines for people in the library and for any library event to insure they follow the maximum of 10-person requirement for gatherings like Storytime or others. Please see below a link to the Governor's Public Health Disaster Emergency and *Section Three sub E* below for clarification of gatherings:

E. Mass Gathering: Social, community, spiritual, religious, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings and events of more than 10 people are hereby prohibited at all locations and venues, including but not limited to parades, festivals, conventions, and fundraisers. Planned large gatherings and events must be canceled or postponed until after termination of this disaster."

Although libraries were not explicitly mentioned in the March 17 order, we encouraged libraries to seriously evaluate closing to the public as soon as possible to protect public health.

We reached out again yesterday (March 26) to the Governor's Office seeking updates to the above language in light of the Governor's [new order](#) to close additional retail establishments and reiterating the recommendation for schools to remain closed through April 13. We will follow up with any updated guidance when we hear back.

Paying Staff During Closures

Earlier this week, we sent out an [email](#) to Iowa public library directors and Iowa library trustees recommending that library staff continue to be paid during library closures as the money has already been budgeted. We understand this is an anxious time and future dollars may seem more uncertain at this point. We appreciate all of the feedback we've received from libraries on this issue and know that in this ever-changing period we find ourselves in that guidance may need to change. We are listening and will update our recommendations as needed.

New COVID-19 and Libraries Information Page

We've created a new webpage to gather all of the updates and information from the State Library related to COVID-19, as well as provide resources for libraries to help protect their staff and communities. Bookmark the link below; it will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.

[COVID-19 and Iowa Libraries](#)

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