



From the State Library - April 13, 2020

Recommendations from the Iowa Department of Public Health for Library Services During COVID-19



Last week, we reached out to the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) for further recommendations on offering library services in light of the Governor's [April 6 proclamation](#) to officially order Iowa libraries closed from 8:00 a.m. on April 7 through April 30, 2020.

Previously on March 19, we sent out guidance on [sanitizing materials](#) from the state epidemiologist at IDPH, but we know there have been further questions and concerns about continuing to offer curbside services and allowing employees to report to library buildings during the closure period.

See the below information from IDPH for recommendations and guidance on library services during the COVID-19 crisis.

IDPH Recommendations

Libraries serve a vital role in healthy communities. If libraries choose to continue providing modified services, please consider the guidelines below to ensure employees remain safe and do not unintentionally spread disease in the community.

General

- COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and spreads mainly from person-to-person when respiratory droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze lands in a healthy person's mouth or nose.
- There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in Iowa at this time.

Employees

- Libraries should conduct a daily [health screening](#) of employees.
 - Send home employees who have a runny nose, cough, sore throat or fever 100.4° F or higher.

- Employees with a [higher risk for severe illness](#) should not interact with the public.

Curbside

- Employees should maintain a minimum of 6 feet of separation from others, including patrons and other employees when possible.
- Employees should wear cloth face masks or coverings when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
 - Homemade face masks or coverings are encouraged, as medical grade surgical masks and respirators are in critically short supply. See two pattern examples below.
 - [Mask Pattern #1](#)
 - [Mask Pattern #2](#)
- Employees should wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol between every patron interaction.

Returns

- There is a chance the virus could live on materials for a period of time after they have been returned.
- The New England Journal of Medicine published a [study March 17, 2020](#) showing the virus was detectable on plastic and stainless steel for up to 72 hours, but less than a day on copper and cardboard.
- COVID-19 mainly spreads through respiratory droplets. The chance of becoming sick with COVID-19 after touching an infected surface is low.

Given the above, libraries wishing to continue providing services to the public should:

- Consider whether it is better to suspend all returns until the pandemic begins to ease; or
- Continue to accept returns but disinfect items like CDs and DVDs and acetate book covers with a cleaner containing an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#); or
- Continue to accept returns, but "quarantine" the materials for a reasonable amount of time to ensure there is no virus present before handling and putting back into circulation.

References

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2020, April 10). COVID-19 and the Global Library Field. Retrieved April 10, 2020, from <https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries#>

Iowa Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Retrieved April 10, 2020, from <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>

Fineberg, H. V., Doremalen, N. van, & Canelli, R. (2020, March 17). Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1: NEJM. Retrieved from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

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