

Pandemics, Natural Disasters, and Other Emergencies Policy

Whelden Memorial Library establishes the following policy for pandemics, public health emergencies, weather related events, natural disasters, and other emergencies to supplement other approved policies. During emergencies, the Library Director is given the authority to deviate from approved policies as necessary to ensure the health and safety of patrons and staff members.

The Director is encouraged to continue providing in-person services and to resume those services as soon as safely able to do so while also complying with the orders and direction of local and state authorities and guidance from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). Internal considerations on open hours, staffing levels, services, and programs will include the availability and/or health status of staff members, the need to maintain safe staffing levels, and conditions in the community. In cases in which the Director is unable to obtain prior approval for changes by the Board or Head of the Trustees, they will notify the Trustees of any changes made as soon as reasonably possible.

Some steps that the Director may take may include, but are not limited to:

- Closing the building early, not opening, or delaying openings
 - When change in open hours occurs unexpectedly due to weather, emergencies, and disasters, scheduled staff members receive no loss in pay
- Reducing public access to areas of the library
- Canceling, suspending, and resuming both library and non-library programs
- Temporarily raising the age at which unaccompanied minors may come to the library by themselves (as of 1/20/22, children under the age of 10 must be accompanied while using library services)
- Setting in-person total occupancy limits and limits on how long individuals may stay
- Implementing a requirement that all patrons wear masks when inside the building or attending programs
 - Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, patrons who qualify for exemptions to wearing face coverings will be directed to use curbside pickup or other remote services to the best of the library's ability
- Eliminating the use of public restrooms or reducing the number of restrooms available to the public
- Temporarily approving a reduction in the minimum staffing levels during open hours, making modifications to services and areas where patrons may go in the library as necessary
- Determining when and which staff members are authorized to work from home and their assignments during remote work
- When a tornado warning or other weather event or emergency occurs during library hours, the library may remain open past its normal closing time to shelter patrons until it is determined that it is safe for everyone to leave

Other temporary changes in operational hours, staffing levels and assignments, services, and programs may be made by the Director as they deem appropriate for the circumstances.

In cases in which the Director is unavailable, they will designate a staff member or the most senior library staff member is given the authority to make any temporary changes to the daily operations of the library. The Library Director and Head of the Trustees will be notified of any changes as soon as reasonably possible.

Approved:

Whelden Memorial Library Board of Trustees, February 2022