



COVID-19 Return to Work Best Practices

Prepared by Regan Agency, Inc.

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Insurance for Libraries

<https://www.reganagency.com/library-insurance/by-the-cover/>

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Overview

As a leader in library insurance for over 35 years, Regan Agency has been advising libraries throughout NY on all matters of insurance and risk management. We have been asked for commentary and recommendations on all matters of library insurance situations.

COVID -19 is a new one for all of us. An unprecedented situation. A global pandemic that stopped the world in its tracks in March 2020, forcing governmental action to shut down our economy, our schools, our way of life, and our library systems.

After approximately two months of being on “Pause”, libraries await some direction to re-opening their facilities.

This document was created to try and provide some “Best Practices” as we transition from stop to go. The idea is to provide guidance- it will not likely be a “one size fits all” solution, but hopefully will share some of what we believe makes sense as you re-open your libraries.

This document is organized into the following areas:

Part I- General Safety/Working Amid COVID -19

Part II- Roadmap to Reopening- 5 Phases

Part III -Looking Forward

Part I

General Safety

Working Amid COVID-19

At some point over the next several months (different counties will have different dates), some guidance to when you can re-open will emerge. Before we get into actually opening the doors and bringing back staff and customers, we feel that there are steps that need to be taken to ensure your library is prepared. Some of these may appear to be common sense, but they are important.

There are a number of precautions that you should be prepared to follow:

1. Reinforce CDC and generally accepted actions to maintain a safe and clean environment - this includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Recommend employees frequently wash hands for 20 seconds - if running water is not completely accessible, alcohol hand rub or hand sanitizer should be used. Signs promoting hand washing should be posted.
 - b. Remind employees to avoid touching eyes/nose/mouth.

- c. Remind/Reinforce that employees practice good respiratory etiquette – cover coughs and sneezes by directing them into elbow.
- d. Advise anyone who is sick to stay home.

Some CDC guidance and printable posters for further review:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

- 2. Make masks available, and require that employees to wear them.
- 3. Social distancing - limit the number of people in small areas such as break rooms, community rooms, and offices.
- 4. Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the building in both public access and staff areas.
- 5. Social distancing - consider limiting the number of number of people who can be inside the building(s) at one time.
- 6. Re-configure workspaces and public areas to limit or, if feasible, eliminate shared equipment like phones, computers, desks. All items should be cleaned/disinfected regularly.

Part II

Roadmap to Re-Opening – 5 Phases

Phase 1

Clean/Sanitize Facilities

As you get approval and consider re-opening your library, the first step would be to start with a thorough cleaning and sanitizing of your building.

Libraries can be tough to truly “sanitize” with the commonly used mists or fogs (because these methods are generally not paper friendly). Areas/rooms without paper in them could be misted or fogged to sanitize if possible, but at a minimum all common surfaces should be cleaned and a plan for regular (hourly or daily) cleaning should be implemented.

Cleaning contractors and maintenance employees should be familiar with proper cleaning methods and products –generally speaking its best to let cleaning products sit on surfaces before wiping away. Be sure that your cleaning contractor or staff are not taking any shortcuts in their cleaning.

Phase 2

Back to Work

We believe a calculated approach needs to be taken here, with staff returning first.

It may be prudent to start small or rotate staff over different days to ensure that proper social distancing can be practiced, and so that everyone can get used to operating under new guidelines. Old habits can take over easily, so it's best to start slowly.

Changes in workspaces should be made to allow people to spread out. If possible, increase the amount of ventilation or outdoor air throughout the building.

Phase 3

Restart Library Borrowing

Contactless service is paramount to start here. This is most likely via curbside pickup and drop off of materials.

Different libraries will have different configurations possible – such as leaving checked out materials on a table outside, in a lobby area, or as on a call that I was on last week, a tent outside. The key here is going to be as little contact as possible, gloves for handling materials and masks would be necessary.

For returned materials the intake should involve setting them aside to quarantine for 72 hours and then cleaning/wiping them (at least the outside surfaces before re-shelving them.

Any public drop-off container/area being used should be wiped/cleaned as well regularly as materials are returned.

On this topic regarding materials that are out in circulation now under the Pause– we believe there are really 2 choices here:

1. Set them aside (if possible) to quarantine for 72 hours and then same as above- cleaning/wiping before re-introduction to the collection.
2. Just let patrons keep the materials (we do realize this could have a significant cost).

Phase 4

Patron Access to Library

At some point there will be a demand or a need for patrons to use the library in a traditional or somewhat traditional manner. Due to many factors in access and timing of access we are not sure we can put a hard date on this, but rather we can just outline a process or present some ideas as follows:

1. Similar to the staff model, a limited number of people should be allowed in a building at one time. People who are allowed in should be given a time limit for their visit

and MUST wear a mask and gloves. Rules or guidelines for social distancing must be outlined for visitors - by signage and/or marks on the floor as some retail stores are doing.

2. As suggested by a Director that we work with, an appointment system may be a model worth reviewing, where patrons can schedule a time slot to come in and review/gather materials. This would limit the number of people who could be in the building and give the library control over foot traffic/congregating.
3. For any system that is contemplated, there must be limits again on contact/proximity. This may require that a barrier be placed between a staff member and patron, similar a bank teller window. The idea here being to limit any shared respiratory situations.

Phase 5

On Campus Programs/Events

At this point, assuming all of the prior phases ran reasonably smooth you might be ready to run on campus programs and events.

We believe we are quite a way off from this Phase, this should be a phase that we can re-visit much later this year or probably more likely 2021.

The gathering of any groups in a library may be subject to higher authority guidelines. We will review them when they become available.

Part III

Looking Forward

COVID -19 has presented us with many challenges. In many cases, there is not one answer, one solution. There may not be a one size fits all solution for all libraries.

We believe it's best to make decisions carefully and to continually reassess your actions and your plan to ensure it is working. Plans, guidelines, decisions, precautionary measures should be documented as a record.

Regan Agency and our By the Cover Library Insurance Program are here to assist, to help guide you along the way. We are in uncharted territory so if there is a question please do not hesitate to contact our office.

We hope you find this document helpful. We encourage you to share this document in your Director groups and/or library system.

We wish you the best to stay safe!

Thank you.

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