

Epidemic, Pandemic and Communicable Diseases Policy

Purpose

To provide guidance for Timberland Regional Library (TRL) staff and administration in the event of an epidemic, pandemic, or communicable disease event.

Scope

The following policy applies to all employees and patrons of TRL and to arrangements with TRL and external entities.

Policy

In the event of an epidemic, pandemic, or communicable disease event, TRL administration will implement an Emergency Response Plan in accordance with guidance from the Washington State Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control, Washington State Emergency Management Services, and federal, state, or local officials.

- This plan will outline a multi-stage response for TRL staff and facilities to protect the health and safety of staff and patrons and may limit or restrict activities dependent upon threat of emergent situation.
- Before an official mandate is made by federal, state, or local public health authorities, the Executive Director, or designee may choose to reduce hours, limit in-person services, close library branches or facilities, and/or suspend services.
- If an employee, or a covered dependent, are experiencing symptoms consistent with the virus or agent, the employee is to stay home and take leave in accordance with TRL policy and any applicable collective bargaining agreement. A covered dependent is someone who is considered a dependent or family member covered under applicable policy, collective bargaining agreement, or leave laws.
- Employees should avoid meeting face-to-face with the public or other employees whenever possible. When meeting face-to-face is necessary, employees and patrons are to maintain a six (6) foot distance from others and have no more than ten (10) people in any office meeting room or shared space.

All non-essential travel, meetings, gatherings, workshops, and trainings may be cancelled.

If the virus or agent at issue poses a direct threat to the health or safety of employees or others in the workplace, employees are to report the following immediately to his or her supervisor or Human Resources:

- Potential exposure to the virus or agent.
- If the employee has tested positive to the virus or agent.

- If the employee or someone the employee lives with are experiencing symptoms consistent with the virus or agent.
- If the employee, personally, has been asked to self-quarantine by a health official or health care provider; or
- If the employee has traveled to a country with a CDC Level three (3) health notice or an epidemic of the virus or agent.
- The employee may be required to stay out of the physical workplace for a period of time in accordance with local, state, and federal guidance.
- TRL may ask employees to self-certify that they have not experienced any symptoms of the virus or agent since the last time they worked at, or visited, the workplace.

There may be instances where an employee is sent home due to potential exposure or symptoms of illness in order to protect the health of other employees and the public. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

TRL will ensure that the workplace is clean and will disinfect as necessary to provide a safe and sanitary work environment.

TRL will adhere to federal, state, and local public health and worker safety guidelines.

Employees should report concerns and/or potential violations of this policy to a TRL supervisor or Human Resources.

TRL may log workers and volunteers who come on the premises to support public health contact tracing.

If district facilities remain open or are closed to the public, employees are expected to report to work as scheduled, excluding excused absences pursuant to the established Collective Bargaining Agreement and/or Leaves Policy.

- In order to effectively socially distance and limit transmission of the virus or agent, district facilities may be required to reduce staffing levels. Employees may be asked to stagger work schedules, or have duties reassigned, and may be asked to work from home with the approval of the Executive Director or designee. Such determinations are made on a case-by-case basis.

If district facilities are closed due to government mandate, the Executive Director or designee may elect to provide emergency or administrative leave, in consultation with the Board, to compensate staff for their regularly scheduled hours.

- Staff must remain available to return to work should conditions change.
- Regular employees who are taking vacation leave, sick leave, or other leaves may not convert the time to emergency or administrative leave unless otherwise approved.

Following a district-wide closure due to an epidemic, pandemic, or communicable disease event, TRL Administration will implement a Recovery and Reopening Plan in accordance with guidance from the Washington State Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control, Washington State Emergency Management Services, and federal, state, and local officials.

- This plan will outline a multi-stage response for the eventual reopening of all library facilities, provided that authority is granted by the Executive Director or local public

health authority, all buildings are disinfected per CDC requirement, and buildings meet appropriate staffing levels.

Each phase shall outline graduated steps to reopening in-person services at library facilities, and the appropriate means of communications with staff, vendors, and the public.

Timing of transitions between phases will be left to the discretion of the Executive Director or designee and may be rolled back at any time pursuant to public health information.

Definitions

Epidemic: An increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in the population of that area.

Pandemic: An epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.

Communicable Disease: A disease caused by an infectious agent that can be transmitted from one person, animal, or object to another person by direct or indirect means including transmission through an intermediate host or vector, food, water, or air. Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to measles, influenza, leprosy, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) including the SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus) and tuberculosis. TRL may choose to broaden this definition within best interest and in accordance with information received through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Social Distancing: The public health practice of encouraging people to retain physical distance from one another during disease events in order to slow the spread of infection.

Appropriate Staffing Level: The minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service safely and efficiently as determined by Executive Director or designee.

Background

TRL seeks to establish an appropriate response strategy to epidemic, pandemic or communicable disease events that balance protecting the health of patrons and staff while providing essential library services.

References

TRL Leaves Policy 087.

TRL Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Citations

WAC 246-101-010(8).

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Policy Number: 024

By the enactment of this policy the Board of Trustees of Timberland Regional Library is concurrently rescinding any prior policy or procedure within TRL that is either in conflict with or expansive of the matters addressed in this policy.