



Oregon

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Statewide COVID-19 Advice

Sector: Libraries

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Libraries have unique challenges to address in the context of this public health crisis. Libraries provide access to materials that are checked out to individuals and then returned and made available to others. In addition to library materials, library facilities provide shared resources such as study spaces, computers and equipment, programming spaces, and seating areas that are used by multiple people every day. This sharing of resources is at the heart of library service.

Libraries will make decisions regarding library service based on guidance from local health authorities and local jurisdictions. Any applicable [state-issued health and safety guidance](#) must be followed. To respond to questions from Oregon libraries in how to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, State Library staff have reviewed this state-issued guidance for advice that may also apply to libraries. That advice is included below.

In creating these recommendations, State Library staff reviewed content from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA), and other health and safety professionals. Generally speaking, most of the advice comes from OHA's [COVID-19 Updates](#) site, the CDC's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) site, OHA's [Sector Guidance – General Guidance for Employers and Organizations](#) and OSHA's [workplace guidance regarding COVID-19](#). Some of the recommendations are also adapted from OHA's industry-specific advice for sectors facing similar situations as libraries, including retail establishments, restaurants, athletic facilities, organizations offering youth programs, and others. Specific sources for the advice in each category are indicated, unless the advice comes from the general resources referenced above.

Local situations such as infection rates, community spread, building layouts, availability of staff/volunteers, and other factors may necessitate different measures, up to and including temporarily discontinuing some or all services. The State Library of Oregon encourages libraries to contact their [county health authority](#) or other local health departments for guidance that is tailored to local conditions.

Libraries seeking further information and support to respond to the pandemic may access the State Library's page on [COVID-19 Information for Oregon Libraries](#). Questions may also be directed to Buzzy Nielsen, Program Manager for Library Support and Development Services, at buzzy.nielsen@slo.oregon.gov or 971-375-3486.

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Advice:

General

- Counties are categorized into four risk levels: Extreme, High, Moderate, and Lower. A county's risk level determines what activities are allowed and to what degree, including social gatherings, occupancy limits, and allowable business activities.
 - [Check your county's current risk level](#)
 - [Allowable activities by risk level](#)
- Libraries are considered retail establishments for the purposes of most OHA guidance.
- Follow all [statewide mask, face covering, and face shield guidance](#).
- Review and implement OHA's [General Guidance for Employers](#) and OSHA's [workplace guidance regarding COVID-19](#) as applicable.
- All employers are subject to a [temporary COVID-19 rule](#), and [this document](#) summarizes the requirements as they apply to libraries. Unlike in other guidance, libraries are *not* subject to the additional rules for retail stores (Appendix A-2).

Physical Distancing

Sources: OHA's [guidance for retail stores](#), OHA's [Sector Risk Level Guidance Chart](#), and information from the U.S. Fire Administration (a division of FEMA) on the [impact of social distancing on occupancy](#)

- A library's maximum occupancy is determined by its [county risk level](#) as follows:
 - *Lower and Moderate Risk*: 75% of pre-pandemic capacity (86 ft² per person)
 - *High and Extreme Risk*: 50% of pre-pandemic capacity (120 ft² per person)
- Keep in mind the amount of floorspace occupied by furniture, shelving, etc. when calculating maximum occupancy. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has a simple [online calculator](#) that uses 144 ft² per occupant as the base figure. You can also use the formula below, utilizing the approximate amount of space available to the public in your library and OHA's recommended ft² per person above:

$$\text{Available ft}^2 \times (100\% - \% \text{ of space occupied by furniture, shelves, etc.}) / \text{Allowable ft}^2 \text{ per person}$$

So a library with 10,000 ft² available to the public and 40% of its space taken up by shelving/furniture would have a capacity of 69 people in a Lower or Moderate Risk county and 50 people in a High or Extreme Risk county.

- Libraries should implement policies and procedures that ensure that people maintain at least 6' physical distance.

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- Libraries may need to consider closing or rearranging their buildings or areas of the building where people gather when required physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as:
 - Meeting rooms
 - Study rooms
 - Seating areas
 - Public computers
 - Children’s play areas
- Consider placing clear plastic or glass barriers at service desks or in other places where maintaining six (6) feet of physical distance between staff, volunteers, and patrons is more difficult.
- Encourage one-way traffic flow with marked entrances and exits, but do not block egress for fire exits. Use signs to direct one-way flow of traffic. Consider making stack aisles one-way as well.
- Use signs and tape on the floor to maintain physical distancing while waiting for assistance at service desks or outside the facility when timed access or curbside/contactless services cause a line to be formed.
- Consider offering alternative order-ahead and pick-up options, such as curbside/contactless pickup, or mail delivery service as appropriate and applicable.
- Libraries that cannot maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between people should not open the building to the public and may instead want to consider services such as partial or appointment-based access, holds pick-up, curbside/contactless service, or mail delivery of materials.

Facilities

Sources: OHA’s [guidance to recreation and fitness establishments](#) and CDC’s [COVID-19 employer information for office buildings](#)

- When possible, install touch-free paper towel, soap, and sanitizer dispensers.
- Remove toys, puzzles, and other commonly-shared items from the library.
- Close water fountains, except for those designed to refill water bottles in a contact-free manner.
- Flush water pipes weekly while the building is vacant and prior to resuming normal building use. Stagnant water in pipes can create conditions that favor the growth and spread of Legionella and other harmful bacteria (see CDC’s [“Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation”](#)).
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, if possible, and using fans. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk

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for occupants, including children (e.g., a risk of falling or of breathing outdoor environmental contaminants such as carbon monoxide, molds, or pollens).

- Consider taking steps to improve ventilation in the building, in consultation with an HVAC professional, based on local environmental conditions (temperature/humidity) and ongoing community transmission in the area.
- Maximize the amount of outside air circulated through existing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, to the extent possible, whenever there are staff, volunteers, or patrons in the facility.
- Review the engineering and administrative controls recommended by the CDC in their [information for office buildings](#) to see which might be appropriate for your library.
- Also review the [guidance](#) from American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) for building operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collection Handling

Sources: State Library's "[Updated Advice on Handling Library Materials during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)" and the results of the [REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums \(REALM\)](#) research project

- Quarantine returned library materials for at least 24 hours. Assign a designated space in the building where materials can remain untouched while in quarantine, such as unused public meeting rooms.
- Ensure that individuals handling materials wear gloves, wash hands regularly after interacting with materials, and avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Public Computers and Shared Equipment

Sources: OHA's [guidance to eating and drinking establishments](#), especially the section on video lottery terminals

- Ensure that public computers are spaced so that at least six (6) feet between users is maintained, including when users approach or leave the computer. If workstations cannot be placed at least six feet apart, limit the number of workstations in use at a time with users seated at workstations with at least six (6) feet between other users.
- Require individuals to request computer access from a staff member before they use the device.
- Limit access to one user at or around a computer.
- Clean and disinfect public computers between patrons, using a [disinfectant that is EPA-approved](#) for the SARS-CoV-2 virus or a solution of 70%-95% alcohol. Check documentation from the equipment manufacturer to ensure that the chosen sanitizer will not damage the equipment.

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Many manufacturers recommend spraying the disinfectant on a cloth instead of spraying it directly on the equipment.

- Frequently clean and disinfect other commonly-shared equipment (e.g. self-checks, catalogs, payment systems) using sanitizer as described above.
- Consider using touchless or cashless payment options and checkout systems.

Programming

Source: OHA's [youth programs guidance](#) and guidance for [indoor recreation and fitness establishments](#).

- To the greatest extent possible, libraries should but are not required to provide remote program options such as pre-recorded programs, livestreams, or take-away kits rather than in-person events.
- Consult with [local health professionals](#) before considering offering in-person programming.
- Libraries providing in-person programming for children and youth must follow the [Statewide Reopening Guidance for Youth Programs](#). Library programs are considered “enrichment activities” for the purposes of the guidance. The restrictions on youth programs laid out in this guidance include but are not limited to the following:
 - Drop-in participation is prohibited.
 - Logs must be kept of all participants in the program.
 - No more than 10 people are allowed at a single activity, and they must be physically-distanced.
 - People may not participate in more than two in-person programs per week (see language on cohorts).
 - Staff may not participate in more than three in-person programs per day or more than five in a week (see language on cohorts).
- In-person programs aimed at adults are not subject to the same restrictions as youth programs, but libraries that choose to offer them nonetheless should proceed with caution:
 - Strictly enforce physical distancing guidelines.
 - Generally speaking, smaller groups are safer than larger, outdoor locations are safer than indoor locations, and shorter duration is safer than longer.
 - Prohibit activities that are not allowed to operate (e.g. indoor sports, indoor fitness/exercise classes) based on the [designated level of risk](#) for the library's specific county.
 - Do not allow program participants to share items such as craft supplies, books, or other items during programming, and only use items that can be easily disinfected.

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Cleaning

Sources: OSHA's [temporary COVID-19 rule](#), CDC's [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)

- Frequently clean and disinfect work areas, high-traffic areas, and commonly-touched surfaces in both public and staff/volunteer areas of the library following Oregon OSHA's [Temporary Rule Addressing COVID-19 Workplace Risk](#) and CDC's [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#). This includes the following:

“Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use. For example, certain surfaces and objects in public spaces, such as shopping carts and point of sale keypads, should be cleaned and disinfected before each use.”

- Per OSHA's temporary rule, cleaning frequency should be at minimum:
 - At least once every 24 hours if the workplace is occupied less than 12 hours a day.
 - At least every 8 hours while in use, if the workplace is occupied more than 12 hours a day.
 - Exception: In locations with only "drop-in" availability or minimal staffing, the employer is permitted to rely upon a regular schedule of cleaning and sanitation and directing employees to sanitize their own work surfaces before use.
- Libraries without adequate cleaning supplies should not open the building to the public.
- Use [disinfectants that are EPA-approved](#) for the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. A solution of 70%-95% alcohol content also works.
- Wear gloves when performing cleaning or disinfecting activities.
- Provide handwashing stations or hand sanitizer (70-95% alcohol content) throughout the facility for use by staff, volunteers, and patrons.
- If the library is open to the public, thoroughly clean restroom facilities at least twice daily and, to the extent possible, ensure adequate sanitary supplies (soap, toilet paper, hand sanitizer) are available throughout the day. Libraries may want to consider using a “one-in-one-out” policy, where only one individual is permitted within the restroom at one time.
 - Libraries that are open a small number of daily hours may only need to clean restrooms once daily. Restroom facilities that cannot be cleaned regularly should be kept closed, or a sign should be posted stating that the restroom is unable to be cleaned regularly.

Signage

- Post clear signs listing COVID-19 symptoms; asking staff, volunteers, and patrons with symptoms to stay home; and listing whom to contact if they need assistance.
- Use clear signs to encourage physical distancing.
- Make sure that signs are in multiple languages, as appropriate to your community.
- Signs are available from the Oregon Health Authority on [this website](#). Scroll down to the “Guidance from OHA” section and click “Business Signage.”

Contact Tracing

- Libraries are encouraged to adopt policies consistent with the [recommendations of the American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) and with libraries’ core values of privacy and confidentiality. In relation specifically to contact tracing, the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom states:

“Collection and sharing of information about library users for purposes other than the delivery of library resources, services, and programming — such as information collected for contact tracing — is inconsistent with that mission and may violate laws protecting user privacy if done without the full and informed consent of the library user.

In all cases, access to, and delivery of, library resources and services should not be conditioned on the user’s consent to the collection and use of their information for contact tracing or other purposes unrelated to library service.” – from [“Protecting Privacy in a Pandemic: A Resource Guide”](#)

Sources Cited and Consulted:

- From Oregon Health Authority (OHA):
 - [COVID-19 Updates](#)
 - [Local Public Health Authority Directory](#)
 - [Oregon's COVID-19 Risk Levels](#)
 - [Reopening Public Health Recommendations for the General Public](#)
 - [Sector Guidance – Eating and Drinking Establishments](#)
 - [Sector Guidance – Gatherings](#)
 - [Sector Guidance – General Guidance for Employers and Organizations](#)
 - [Sector Guidance – Indoor Recreation and Indoor Fitness Establishments](#)
 - [Sector Guidance – Retail Stores](#)
 - [Sector Risk Level Guidance Chart](#)
 - [Statewide Reopening Guidance – Masks, Face Coverings, Face Shields](#)
 - [Statewide Reopening Guidance – Youth Programs](#)
- From other statewide sources:
 - [Building a Safe and Strong Oregon](#) (Governor's Office)
 - [COVID-19 and Oregon OSHA](#) (OSHA)
 - [COVID-19: Information for Oregon Libraries](#) (State Library)
 - [COVID-19 Requirements for Workplaces](#) (Dept. of Administrative Services)
 - [Executive Orders](#) (Governor's Office)
 - [OSHA Temporary Rule Summary](#) (SDAO)
 - [Ready Schools, Safe Learners: Guidance for School Year 2020-21](#) (Dept. of Education)
 - [Temporary Rule Addressing COVID-19 Workplace Risk](#) (OSHA)
 - [Updated Advice on Handling Library Materials during COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (State Library)
- From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - [COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#)
 - [Guiding for Cleaning and Disinfecting: Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
 - [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)
- From other federal/national sources:
 - [Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (ASHRAE)
 - [Guidelines on Contact Tracing, Health Checks, and Library Users' Privacy](#) (ALA)
 - [List N Tool: COVID-19 Disinfectants](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
 - [Protecting Privacy in a Pandemic: A Resource Guide](#) (ALA)
 - [REALM Project: REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums](#) (OCLC)
 - [Social Distancing Space Calculator](#) (Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment)
 - [Understanding the Impact of Social Distancing on Occupancy](#) (U.S. Fire Administration)

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