

Stratford Library Association Covid 19 Pandemic Plan of Operation

The impact of the Covid 19 virus on our community is unmatched by any of our previous experiences. This Plan of Operation is designed with the health and safety of library patrons and staff at the forefront as we plan and deliver library services for the duration of this pandemic. This Plan is designed to be responsive to the changing needs of our community at this time. As we move through each Phase of this plan, with the ultimate goal of returning to 'business as usual'; it is important to recognize that our path will not be a straight one and that any resurgence of the virus in our community will require the Library to regress to a previous phase in this plan. Each Phase of this plan will be evaluated on a continual basis, based on guidelines provided by the [Connecticut State Library](#) and recommendations made by Federal, State and Local health authorities, including the [Centers for Disease Control](#), the [Connecticut Department of Public Health](#) and the [Stratford Health Department](#).

Phase 1 – Building Closed to the Public-Remote Service Only—Library Board Approved 3/13/20

Protective gear required: gloves, masks, disinfecting wipes/spray, hand sanitizer

- Staff who are able to work from home, do so, providing a log of their work at home tasks each week. Tasks include: programming, program planning, cataloging, ordering, professional development, database cleanup, coverage of Reference Chat Services, meetings, etc.
- A small crew of library workers are present in the building, Monday-Saturday 9:30am-5pm. Procedures have been enacted requiring each staff person to disinfect work spaces, wear protective masks when moving about the building and use gloves when handling library materials. Their focus is on tasks that must be accomplished on site including: checking in returned items, shelving materials, receiving of orders, processing payments, payroll and HR oversight, answering phone inquiries, collection maintenance (weeding, shelf reading, inventory, repairs), etc.
- Custodial work on site is providing a thorough cleaning of bathrooms, shared spaces and high touch areas, vacuuming and emptying trash as needed. Providing a systematic disinfection of high touch and shared spaces three times each day. With so few staff in the building, the need for routine cleaning is diminished, enabling frequent high touch disinfecting along with a variety of deep-clean tasks and building maintenance projects.
- All items currently checked out to patrons on March 12, 2020 have had their date due extended (first through April 30th, then extended to June 30th). Patrons may return items in the book drops. Staff are trained in safe handling of returned items and the use of personal protective gear including gloves and masks. All returned items are quarantined for three days before being shelved, based on IMLS recommendations
- Library cards set to expire at this time, are being automatically renewed through September 30, 2020. Patrons who need to renew cards may do so over the phone. People who need to obtain a library cards to access online services may register over the phone and will be provided with a temporary library card number to use. The temporary cards are set to expire on September 30, 2020 and patrons may convert to a regular account by providing proof of residency after the library reopens to the public.
- Reference services are provided by phone when staff are present in the building. Online Chat Reference services are available 10am-8pm Monday- Thursday; 10am-5pm Friday and Saturday.

Typical transactions occur, along with a significant uptick in technical support questions to assist patrons in the use of the Library's premium web services such as e-books, downloadable video, music and audiobook services, job seeker resources, genealogy and other research databases.

- Programming has migrated to an online platform, with security measures in place to circumvent disruptive participants. All interactive programs require preregistration and are passworded. The Library is also offering video-based programming on our YouTube Channel and instructions for self-directed programs.
- Increased online presence, including website updates, social media posts and newsletters.
- Construction in the Children's Department continues with contractors and library workers strictly segregated from one another.

Phase 2 – Building Closed to the Public-Remote and Contact-free Pickup Service—Library Board Approved 5/7/20 for implementation based on State and Local guidelines.

Protective gear required: gloves, masks, disinfecting wipes/spray, hand sanitizer, plastic grocery bags

- Staff is segregated into three crews. Each crew reports to the Library to work two days per week and works from home for the remainder of their schedule. This goal of this separation is to help slow the spread of Covid 19 among staff in the event an asymptomatic worker is present. Exceptions will be made for Custodial, IT and Administrative workers whose proscribed work requires their presence in the building. They will be required to have little-no contact with workers who are not on their crew and their workspaces will be off limits to workers who are not on their crew. Required protective measures are the same as Phase 1 with an increase in use of masks when not alone in a space. Workers are not to spend more than a few minutes working in a shared space within 6' of one another.
- Contact-free pick up service will begin, with patrons who have items currently waiting on the Hold shelf serving as our test group for the first few days so that the backlog can be cleared. A full plan for Contact-free service has been developed to include: instructions for placing holds, a schedule for pickup appointments, safe handling of items being checked out, outdoor no-contact pick up, and in-trunk delivery for those with mobility issues. The procedures are designed to limit the number of people approaching the Library building at one time, they call for no physical contact between staff and patrons and are designed to protect patron privacy.
- Patrons may continue to return items in the book drops. No fines will be collected at this time. All items will remain in quarantine for three days before being shelved or made available for holds.
- Keyboard skins will be installed on all service desk computers. Staff will be responsible for wiping down workspaces between users.
- All services and programs enacted in Phase 1 remain available.

Phase 3 – Building Open for Computer Lab Users and Contact-free Pickup Service— Library Board Approved 6/18/20 for implementation based on State and Local guidelines.

Protective gear required: gloves, masks, face shields, disinfecting wipes/spray, touch-free hand sanitizer, keyboard & monitor skins, mouse protectors, plastic grocery bags, plastic/plexiglass shields at public service desks

- All procedures, services and programs enacted in Phases 1 &2 remain in place.
- Staff begins this phase segregated into three crews as in Phase 2, but the consolidation into two crews will occur during this phase to extend hours of operation and to offer service to more patrons.
- The Adult and Teen Service desks will be repositioned so that they back up to a wall or bookshelf rather than to an open public space. The Children's Department and the Check-Out Desk will remain closed in order to focus on Contact-free Take Out service and moving back into the renovated Children's Department.
- The Adult and Teen Computer Labs will be reopened, with fewer workstations and with workstations spread apart. Computer services will be available by appointment only. Keyboard and monitor skins and mouse covers will be installed on all public computers. Staff will be responsible for safely disinfecting the workstation after each appointment.
- Staff will utilize technical support software in order to provide remote assistance for patrons using public computers. In the event a staff person must provide assistance in the computer lab, they will be wearing a mask, face shield and gloves.
- Patrons entering the building:
 - must call ahead for a reservation to use a computer in the Adult or Teen Computer Lab.
 - must be entering grade 6 or older to schedule an appointment.
 - must plan to enter the library alone*.
 - will be subject to a symptom survey and will be asked to leave if coughing or sneezing excessively.
 - must wear a mask and adhere to CDC social distancing guidelines.
 - must use hand sanitizer upon entry.
 - must go directly to the Adult or Teen Services Desk to check in.
 - cannot leave the computer lab area, browse the stacks or borrow items during their visit.
 - will have printers and photocopiers available, however must plan to bring nickels, dimes, quarters, \$1 or \$5 bills. The Library will not accept pennies or break larger bills.
 - must exit the building immediately when finished in the computer lab.
- Stack areas, public seating, public fax and water fountains will not be accessible to the public.

**Exceptions may be made at the time reservations are made to accommodate those requiring personal assistance in the use of computers. Anyone accompanying a person using a computer must remain with that individual, in the computer lab at all times.*

Phase 4—Building open for Computer Lab users and Patrons Borrowing Materials. Library Board Approved 7/21/20 (Step One: 7/27/20; Step 2: 8/3/20; Children’s Dept. 8/10/20 pending Certificate of Occupancy, post renovation)

Protective gear required: gloves, masks, face shields, disinfecting wipes/spray, touch-free hand sanitizer, keyboard & monitor skins, mouse protectors, plastic grocery bags, plastic/plexiglass shields at public service desks (including the temporary indoor greeter station), walkie talkies.

Step One:

- All procedures, services and programs enacted in Phases 1, 2, & 3 remain in place. The number of patrons utilizing Library Take Out services will be reduced as access to the Check-Out Desk and collection browsing is re-introduced.
- Staff will remain segregated into two alternating crews during this phase.
- There will be a limit to the number of people allowed to enter the building, based on current State of Connecticut and Town of Stratford Health Department recommendations.
- A greeter will be stationed at the door to maintain the capacity head count and communicate with various departments using a walkie talkie to ensure that there isn’t overcrowding in one area.
- Patrons will be encouraged to limit the duration of their visit and may be asked to leave so that others waiting to enter will have the opportunity to do so.
- The greeter will guide patrons through the self-screening and review, the rules for entry and determine the library spaces they plan to visit in order to assess capacity.
- Patrons must enter the building via the back (parking lot) entrance and:
 - will be subject to a symptom survey and will be asked to leave if coughing or sneezing excessively.
 - must wear a mask and adhere to CDC social distancing guidelines.
 - must use hand sanitizer upon entry.
 - must call ahead for a reservation to use a computer in the Adult or Teen Computer Lab in order to ensure availability (this will also apply to the Children’s Computer Lab when that space reopens).
 - will have printers and photocopiers available, however must plan to bring nickels, dimes, quarters, \$1 or \$5 bills. The Library will not accept pennies or break larger bills.
- The Check-Out Desk will reopen, ending default contact-free pick-up service (with exceptions made for the most vulnerable by appointment). Patrons will also be able to browse the collections available in the Lobby.
- Social distancing signage and marks will be placed throughout the building, with directional arrows in place where possible.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout the building.
- Remote reference services (phone, email & chat) will continue during Phase 4.
- Public seating, payphone, fax, water fountains, toys, study rooms and meeting rooms will remain unavailable.
- No in-person programming will be offered. Online programs and services continue.

Step Two:

- Transition to Step Two will occur once patron behavior patterns have been assessed and after any identified safety issues are addressed during Step One
- Expand collection browsing to include Adult and Teen collections on the Main Floor, Mezzanine and Lower Level. The Children's Department will reopen once the post-renovation Certificate of Occupancy has cleared. Staff will continue to retrieve items from Children's Department until it can be reopened.
- Payment of fees now accepted.
- Evaluate hours of operation to include evening hours.

Phase 5 –Building Open With Some Limitations (Library Board Approved 5/20/21 to go into effect on 7/6/21)

Protective gear required: gloves (optional, depending on task), masks, face shields (optional), disinfecting wipes/spray, touch-free hand sanitizer, keyboard & monitor skins, mouse protectors, plastic/plexiglass shields at public service desks

- All staff will return to working in the building, continuing to follow social distancing within workspaces.
- The Library will be open for full hours of operation Monday – Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday & Saturday 10am-5pm, Sundays 1-5pm (October-May). During hours of operation, all service desks and stack areas will be open to the public. Contact free pick-up will remain available by request.
- A Greeter will continue to be posted at the parking lot entrance to guide patrons through a self-screening, review the rules for entry and to monitor building capacity. The Greeter position may be eliminated as local rates of Covid 19 infections decrease and vaccinations become available for our younger patrons. The Main Street entrance will remain closed until a Greeter is no longer needed.
- Public Computers in the Reference and Teen areas available by appointment. Computer services for walk-ins will be available on a limited, first-come, first-served basis.
- Study Rooms will open, for a maximum of two people per room, by appointment. Study Rooms for walk-ins will be available on a limited, first-come, first-served basis.
- Table seating will be reintroduced in the Lower Level, adhering to social distancing requirements. Additional seating options may be offered once patron behavior patterns have been assessed.
- Patrons may continue to return items in the book drops. All items will remain in quarantine for two days before being shelved or made available for holds. Quarantine practices will be continually reevaluated and adjusted according to state and local health department advice.
- Payphone, fax, water fountains, toys, the Lovell Room, Board Room, Children's Program Room and Conference Room will remain unavailable.
- Patrons will be encouraged to limit the duration of their visit to two hours and may be asked to leave so that others waiting to enter will have the opportunity to do so.
- The Library will offer a combination of online and in-person programs. In person programs will be held outdoors, weather permitting.

Phase 5, Step Two: Library Board Approved 7/15/21 to go into effect on 7/19/21

The Library will continue to monitor local Covid 19 positivity and hospitalization rates and may reinstate prior precautions in the event library activities are identified as creating a risk for the spread of infection.

- Staff and patrons **who are fully vaccinated** are no longer required to wear masks inside the Library, with the exception of the Children's Department. Until our youngest patrons have the opportunity to be vaccinated, masks will be required in their space regardless of your vaccination status.
- The Greeter position will be closed and both the Parking Lot and Main Street entrances will be open for use during library hours.
- Public computers will be available in Adult and Teen Departments on a walk in basis. Computer services will be reinstated in the Children's Department in August 2021.
- The Library will no longer quarantine returned items.
- The time limit for patron visits to the library will be eliminated.
- The Library will continue to offer both online and in person programming, and will schedule indoor programming on a limited basis, expanding as programming spaces revert from storage/staff spaces into programming spaces.
- The Lovell and Board Rooms may be reserved for use by Community groups, subject to social distancing protocols.
- In the event an employee or patron contracts Covid 19, contact tracing protocols remain in place, along with quarantine requirements for individuals who were in close contact (within 6 feet) to the infected person(s) for 15 minutes or longer.

Phase 6—Minimal Limitations, With the Flexibility to Respond to Local Rates of Positivity (Library Board Approved 3/17/22 to go into effect on 3/21/22)

The Library will continue to monitor local Covid 19 positivity and hospitalization rates and may reinstate prior precautions in the event library activities are identified by the CDC, State or Local Health Authorities as creating a risk for the spread of infection.

- Face masks are optional for both staff and patrons inside the Library, however signage encouraging masks in the Children's Department will remain until our youngest patrons have the opportunity to be vaccinated.
- Signage for social distancing and reduced room capacity limits removed.
- The Payphone, water fountains and coffee service fully available for use, with enhanced cleaning protocols.
- Toys and playscapes in the Children's Department will gradually be reintroduced during spring and summer 2022, with enhanced cleaning protocols.
- The Library will focus efforts on planning in person programming, utilizing both indoor and outdoor spaces, with some online and Grab'n'Go options based on patron demand.
- The Lovell Room, Board Room and Conference Room may be reserved for use by Community groups according to the existing Library Policy as posted at <http://stratfordlibrary.org/stratford-library-policies/reserve-a-meeting-room/> .

- In the event an employee or patron contracts Covid 19, contact tracing protocols remain in place, along with quarantine requirements for individuals who were in close contact (within 6 feet) to the infected person(s) for 15 minutes or longer in a 24 hour period. The Library will follow the CDC guidelines for quarantine/isolation as posted at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html> unless State or Local Health Authorities provide different guidelines.

Phase 7 --Full return to pre-pandemic operations TBD