COVID-19 Prevention Checklist
Public Library Guidance

May 18, 2020

Update issued, January 15, 2021

On May 18, 2020, the Maine Library Commission unanimously adopted the attached Public Library Checklist for safe reopening and operations of Maine libraries. The checklist was formally submitted to Commissioner Heather Johnson of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and to Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. On January 15, the Maine Library Commission approved an update to the original checklist.

On May 20, 2020, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development issued a Stage 2 checklist for Public and Community Buildings. On November 6, 2020, the checklist was update for Stage 4. Within this checklist, DECD stated:

Public and community settings include, but are not limited to, municipal and county offices and libraries. As local communities and governing bodies determine the best way to safely re-open services, this document and the COVID-19 Prevention Checklist General Guidance reflect baseline steps. Other governing bodies and associations may release further guidance for specific types of public and community buildings. Libraries, in particular, should refer to the checklist published by the Maine Library Commission for further guidance: COVID-19 Prevention Checklist –Public Library Guidance.

The process for public libraries to safely open is:

1. Review the Public and Community Buildings Checklist (all municipal, county, libraries, etc.)
2. Review the General Guidance Checklist (all businesses)
3. Review the Public Library Checklist adopted by the Maine Library Commission.
4. Prepare a plan to open safely that is approved by your governing body
5. Fill out the COVID-19 Prevention Form (select Public and Community Buildings)
6. Download a sign/badge to post on your door or in your library (optional)

Please contact your Maine State Library Regional Liaison if you need any assistance or have any questions.

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Public Library Guidance

As the number of COVID-19 cases is fluctuating and unpredictable, the State of Maine changes guidance in response to fight the spread of the virus. This checklist and guidance may change in accordance with the Governor's Executive Orders.

This is a guidance checklist document that has been prepared by the Maine State Library, approved by the Maine Library Commission and recommended as guidance by the Maine DECD as part of their Public and Community Building Guidance Checklist (updated November 4, 2020). Both checklists have been prepared for public libraries so they can meet minimum health guidelines and operate safely when they choose to have buildings open or closed during the pandemic. Please make sure you pair this document with the General Guidance document that applies to all institutions in Maine.

Please note: This document may be updated as additional information and resources become available. **Additionally, your <u>local communities and governing bodies</u> approve plans and any actions to safely reopen and close the library building to the public. This document reflects <u>minimum</u> steps a library must consider. Libraries may certainly go beyond the guidance in this outline if local governance and COVID infection rates require. Governor Mill's Executive Orders may affect guidance and MSL will inform libraries of those variances.**

Public Libraries Alignment with Maine's Staged Reopening

Timeline of State of Maine response to COVID-19

Summary of Stages

Stage 1 (March 18 – June 2020)
Stage 2 (June 2020) Public Libraries may reopen in accordance with all checklists)
Public libraries assess the following as plans for opening buildings to the public and staff are developed with the health and safety of library staff and visitors as the primary objective.
Libraries should use this checklist to develop implementation plans.
Plans should be revised regularly based upon emerging public health guidance and presence of community spread.
Libraries should use appropriate square footage and building configuration (size of rooms) in the planning process. Use only library spaces where 6 ft. physical distancing between people can be maintained.
Libraries determine what services they offer in Stage 2.

Stage 3 (July-September 2020)
Public libraries may utilize plans developed to open library buildings to the public and offer services that conform to physical distancing, proper utilization of PPE plus the library's ability to follow their approved plans by their appropriate governing authorities (municipalities and/or governing boards) with the *health and safety of library staff and visitors as the primary objective*.
Local public health guidance and presence of community spread are considered.
Libraries should use appropriate square footage and building configuration (size of rooms) to allow for continued physical distancing for patrons and staff.

Stage 4 (October 2020 -)

Public libraries may utilize plans developed to open or re-close library buildings to the public and offer services that conform to physical distancing, proper utilization of PPE plus the library's ability to follow their approved plans by their appropriate governing authorities (municipalities and/or governing boards) with the health and safety of library staff and visitors as the primary objective. Local public health guidance and presence of community spread are considered.

The number of people allowed in buildings is currently 5 people per 1000 square foot based upon the Governor's most recent Executive Order dated November 4, 2020.

Libraries use appropriate square footage and building configuration (size of rooms), evaluation of air ventilation and HVAC, to determine number of patrons and staff allowed in the library building.

Libraries must follow the Governor's Guidance on masks in public settings: "Face covering requirements … apply in public settings regardless of the ability to maintain physical distance." Libraries must "as soon as practicable, post plainly visible signs notifying entrants of the requirement to wear cloth face coverings, and may deny service or entry for non-compliance with the Governor's face covering requirements.

Library Specific Guidance

Approved by the Maine Library Commission, May 18, 2020
Update Approved January 15, 2021
Public and Community Building Checklist published, May 20, 2020 and
updated November 6, 2020

Libraries open buildings only if they are in compliance with both checklists.
No library is required to open.
Libraries determine the need to rollback services based on capacity, needs and local COVID
infection rates and/or outbreaks

Goals

The goals of this guidance are to:
1. Protect the health of patrons, library staff, and the local community from COVID-19 infection.
2. Control the spread of COVID-19 by reducing exposure to respiratory droplets through physical distancing, gathering limits, and face coverings; increase hand hygiene, and avoid shared items and common touch surfaces.

Checklist and Guidance Sections

Protecting Library Staff

- Require employees and patrons to wear face coverings in accordance with Executive Orders and in alignment with guidance in other checklists including Public and Community Buildings (Updated 11/6/20), Museums and Town Meetings. "Require all staff, vendors, and visitors to wear a face covering, per Executive Order. Face coverings are not required when individuals are alone in personal offices. See more guidance under Additional Guidance for Office Settings in the Public and Community Buildings Checklist.
- Provide gloves and/or institute disinfecting and handwashing protocols for employees when in contact with high-touch surfaces, cleaning and disinfecting, and direct contact with patron handled library materials. Gloves should be changed when library staff move between tasks (shelving, handling returned materials, checking books out, etc.)
  - o Wear gloves or use handwashing/disinfectant when handling any patron library card or patron or ILL library materials.
  - o Wear gloves or use handwashing/disinfectant when returning library cards, books, other library materials or cash to patrons. Libraries may use bags for this purpose as well.
- Provide workers with up-to-date COVID -19 information and training on safe donning, doffing,

and disposal of personal protective equipment such as gloves and face coverings.
- o COVID-19 Information: Maine CDC, National CDC
- o Masks: National CDC; Maine CDC
- o Gloves: Project 3D; Montana State Library
- o Be aware of Library Staff mental health and stress. Offer time for webinars like Taking Care of Yourself and Your Staff as You Re-open the Library Online or others that are highlighted on the be Statewide Library CE Calendar on a regular basis.
- o National resource at WebJunction for the library community on COVID

Protecting and Serving Patrons

Inform your patrons of your COVID-19 policies and procedures in advance, if possible, via website, newsletters, newspaper, signage, etc.
- **Post on library doors:**
  - o Don't come to the library if you feel sick
  - o Limit time in the library to 30 minutes
  - o Maintain physical distance in all areas of the library
  - o Follow signage and library staff instructions in library for accessing library materials
  - o Face coverings are required for staff and patron safety (following the Governor's Executive Order and guidance in the Public and Community Buildings Checklist).
- Use posters and signage in the library to remind patrons and staff of physical distancing at entrance, checkout areas, computers, counters, patron behavior, etc.
- Encourage patrons to limit who they bring into the library, particularly children.
- Based upon room size, consider opening Children's area for one family at a time
- Arrange furniture and any seating to ensure **required** physical distancing.
- Consider patron appointments or limiting time patrons can spend in the library to reduce possible transmission of COVID-19.
- Consider special hours for high-risk individuals to make appointments to use the library.
- Support physical distance between patrons and library staff by taping off 6 feet distance from counter.
- Use of plexiglass barriers
  - o Minimum: a temporary easy to install plexiglass barrier to maximize physical distancing where appropriate in the library based on procedures for check-out and circulation desk configuration.
  - o Maximum: more permanent glass or plexiglass barriers that the library will most likely keep in place beyond Stage 4.
- Do not allow patrons in library staff areas.
- Minimize shared touch surfaces such as tablets, pens, library cards, receipts, etc.
- Consider going fine free to limit cash transactions
- Consider free printing to limit contact and cash transactions depending on your local printer access and policies.

- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g. counter tops, door handles, keyboard covers, phones) in the library often. See general guidance and CDC Workplace Guidance. See also latest REALM test # 6 results for information about COVID virus and surfaces.
- CDC - Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

Reminder: People in the library must be able to appropriately physical distance. The library facility must be able to accommodate the physical distancing requirement. If unable, then reduce the number of people allowed in the library facility to accomplish the physical distancing requirement. Please see Library Building Guidance below.

Library Buildings

- Understand the square footage of the library facility in context of physical distancing for staff and patrons.
- Use the PLS PDF of library measurements remembering that this number is total square footage and must be adjusted for public and staff space as well as the layout of the building. Please remember that these numbers are reported per the federal definition and include non-library spaces (shared with other agencies like a town office which patrons have access to) and non-public spaces within the library.
- Factor in winter indoor environments and your building's HVAC system capacities when setting polices for length of stay, hours open, staff scheduling and assignments, etc.

Please measure the square footage of the publicly accessible spaces within the library and use that number to determine capacity. Many libraries have small confined spaces where it is difficult to keep 6 feet apart.

Limit the number of people in the library to no more than the maximum allowable under Governor Mills' Executive orders. Libraries should also seek guidance from local building code and fire officials.

HVAC Assessment

Going into the winter months libraries need to be aware that the virus is more easily spread in enclosed spaces and factor in their HVAC and air flow in the library building as indicated by this article: Many ventilation systems may increase risk of COVID-19 exposure, study suggests.

Please read and use this guidance as you assess the level of services to provide in the library building.

COVID-19 Environmental Controls Resources - a PDF prepared by MSL Library development staff.

Resources are from CDC, EPA, ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-conditioning Engineers and OSHA.

ASHRAE FAQ – Quick Overview

For additional information, this is from Maine DOE/CDC for schools:

Maine DOE Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction: Physical Distancing and Facilities

Six requirements must be met before schools may offer in-person classes. One requirement is Physical Distancing and Facilities:

"Adequate ventilation is required for classrooms, with schools having flexibility in implementation such as using properly working ventilation systems or outdoor air exchange using fans in open windows or doors. Groups in any one area, room, or classroom must not exceed the Governor's gathering size limits."

Restrooms

- Minimum: Create signage on the restroom door that indicates when the restroom was last cleaned. Clean on a regular and scheduled basis.
- Maximum: Establish separate restrooms for staff and patrons and use minimum guidance.
- Install signage promoting proper handwashing.
- Consider installing touch-free fixtures if possible (faucets, soap dispensers, paper towels).
- Check with health officials for local ordinances and building codes if you intend to close public access to bathrooms. Guidance from Public and Community Buildings Checklist.

Safe Handing of Library Materials in your Library

Guidance is variable regarding the life of the virus on fomites (objects or materials which are likely to carry infection).Most research has been done in laboratory versus real life settings. The research from REALM is just one tool to use to establish local procedures. Other articles stress real life versus laboratory conditions. Exaggerated risk of transmission of COVID-19 by fomites and Low risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission by fomites in real-life conditions.

Note from Nate Hill Chair of the Operations Working Group of the REALM study Executive Director Metropolitan New York Library Council regarding REALM: "This project was never meant to tell you how many days you should quarantine for. That is for you to decide. The project generates data via the experiments which can be used in concert with other research so that folks can make their own decisions about what is right in their context, in their community."

MSL recommends: Quarantine returned library materials for a minimum of 72 hours.

- Library lendable items are a made of a variety of materials and the latest REALM research studies indicate that the coronavirus can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours and more under laboratory conditions. Time is the best sanitizer

- Washing and disinfecting library materials may damage them. Latest guidance from the NEDCC.

- Continue to remind library workers to not touch their face and practice good hand hygiene, especially while handling all library materials.

- Books and other library materials that have been on library shelves, in a bag or in a tote and only touched by sanitized, gloved or washed hands for 72 hours are considered safe for patrons and library staff.

Quarantining of library materials should be done when:

- Materials are returned to the book drop or by drop off appointment or left in a designated area.

- Handled by patrons in the library who have not sanitized hands

  - Note: Library materials (CD cased, acetate book covers, etc.) **may** be cleaned/disinfected using approved cleaning/disinfecting products but **quarantine** is a safer option, as it reduces library staff exposure and uses less PPE (gloves)

COVID Quarantine and Van Delivery Guidance and Best Practices for Interlibrary Loan

The Maine State Library will monitor research and at this time will provide guidance for Interlibrary Loan materials and van delivery items that may impact local procedures. Please adhere to MSL guidance so all library staff and patrons know materials are treated equitably.

<p align="center">The Maine Library community collectively agrees that:</p>

• Safe handling with washed/disinfected hands and wearing masks is practiced in all libraries and is the primary way to keep library staff and patrons safe

• All library collections on the shelves are safe, have been quarantined 72 hours* and therefore any item in a library's collection is safe to circulate and is safe for Interlibrary Loan and Van Delivery. Quarantining library materials for 72 hours is an additional way to disrupt the natural flow of the virus

*• **Combining** these two practices together makes it highly unlikely library staff or patrons would contract COVID-19 from library materials*

Quarantine Summary: The following quarantine best practice procedure is based upon when and where a patron last touched the library book/item.

Any item returned to the library by a patron must be quarantined for 72 hours **at the library where the item is returned**. **Reason: This is the highest and most likely risk point for that item to have COVID-19 and the optimum point to quarantine.**
Once quarantined, the items are lendable to local patrons, available for interlibrary loan, or ready to be returned to a lending library.

How to treat Outgoing Interlibrary Loan items for Van Delivery
• Any item touched by library staff will be safely handled and thus safe to pack and send through interlibrary loan immediately
• Tote tops are wiped down by both libraries and Freedom Xpress as a cooperative cleaning practice
• **Bags *need no quarantining*** since they are handled by FX staff and library staff who are wearing masks and with washed/disinfected hands.

How to treat Incoming materials from Van Delivery
• Contents of totes delivered by FX and processed by library staff can immediately be re-shelved or checked out to a patron. Reason: All materials have been quarantined for 72 hours and have been safely handled by library staff and FX.

* The 72- hour time frame for quarantine will be re-evaluated in January 2021. Thereafter, evaluations will be conducted every quarter until there is no longer a need for the quarantining of materials.

Quarantine Details:

Guidance for Library Collection and Circulation to the Community
1. All items returned from patrons should be quarantined for 72 hours before they are re-shelved. Note: The Maine State Library is using a 72-hour quarantine as an agreed upon standard at this time. This has been our guidance, and additionally, represents a midpoint of national practices of 24 hours to 7 days.

2. If patrons browsing the library's collection have disinfected hands prior to touching books/library materials, or if your library policy is to have patrons place touched items on a "to be quarantined" table if not checked out, you can consider these materials safe for patrons and safe to circulate via Interlibrary Loan. Note: The Maine State Library believes that casual touching of books in the collection presents a low possibility of infection and is comfortable with libraries determining their own policy around quarantine in these circumstances.

3. **All library staff** need to comply with safety protocols: hand washing; hand sanitizing; mask wearing while working among others in the library and handling library materials. *Result: Books on shelves have been handled safely and likelihood of virus on books is minimal.*

Processing Guidance for Outgoing and Returning Interlibrary Loan Items
1. The expectation is that all items on a library's shelves are safe to **circulate via ILL** just as they are safe to check out to your library's patrons. If these items were to be checked out to patron, they would already have been quarantined 72 hours before being re-shelved.

2. The expectation is that all ILL books/materials **returned** to a library are safe to **send back via delivery** because they have undergone a 72- hour quarantine when returned to the library. Note: Current research suggests that the point of return of any item touched by a library's patrons is the *optimum point to quarantine*, because this is where the highest risk occurs.

3. Items received in delivery can be immediately processed by library staff.

4. Library staff who process ILL materials are safe **because they are following safe handling of their collection and ILL items**. Note: Local library leadership may need to reassure staff that when materials are handled with masks, washing hands or disinfecting before and after handling items, and not touching faces, that they are as safe as any of us are during COVID. There currently exists **no documentation** that anyone has ever contracted COVID-19 from a library book, mail, or food from a store.

5. Transit bags are being handled by staff and FX sorters following safe handling protocols (hand washing; hand sanitizing; mask wearing).

6. The tops and handles of totes are wiped down/disinfected and bags are placed in totes by library staff following safe handling with masked and clean hands.

7. Totes are picked up by Freedom Xpress (FX) driver. FX sorters are following their procedures for handwashing, disinfecting, gloves and masks.
     a. Drivers and sorters wear masks and practice handwashing and/or disinfecting. *(Please report*

to FX via Feedback Form if your driver is not masked.)
b. The top and handles of totes are wiped down in the sorting FX facility
c. Trucks go to Portland for southern routes. Northern routes go to the Brewer depot then to Portland for sorting. Bags are removed from totes and sorted at Portland sorting facility into library bins.
d. Bags are removed from bins and staged in Portland trucks – or for transport to Brewer to be staged from that location to deliver to libraries.

8. Totes in trucks are delivered to libraries via routes from Portland and Brewer.

9. Library staff follow safe handling protocols (hand washing; hand sanitizing; mask wearing) while removing bags from totes.

10. The Maine State Library asks that you do not use van delivery totes to quarantine. **No incoming items need be quarantined following the practices out lined above. Please make safety a priority in ILL practices.**

Results of this Guidance

The process described above results in the following:

1. Items have received a minimum of 72 hours quarantine plus any time traveling via the delivery system.
- Some items traveling through ILL will have additional time due to variances in delivery days for libraries.

2. Ensures that all items received at each library can i**mmediately** be checked in, circulated, and/or processed.

3. Staff are kept safe.

Services

Lending Services - Curbside
- Curbside Services can begin based upon library readiness and staff capacity.
- Schedule appointments and materials for pick up by phone or email or by utilizing your library's ILS/LMS functions.
- Have patrons stay in their vehicles if library staff will be delivering materials curbside.
- Parking lot and spaces – clearly designate areas for curbside pickup. Institute procedures for patrons to call.
- If patrons are picking up designated bags of materials, ensure they are clearly marked and inform patrons that only one person is allowed in the materials pick up area. Patrons are not to congregate or linger when picking up materials.
- Create a designated "touch-free" drop spot for library materials if a book drop is not available

for materials return

Lending Services – In the Library Building

- Support physical distance between patrons and library staff by taping off a counter checkout area and waiting line with 6-foot intervals marked.
- Follow a closed stack versus an open stack model for lending materials if necessary for physical distancing.
- For open stacks, create signage and guided paths through library stacks (one-way signs, floor stickers, arrows, etc.) to maintain physical distancing in all areas of the library.
- Don't serve coffee, food or snacks. Libraries working with other community organizations to provide physical services should consider providing these services curbside.
- Consider circulation desks, checkout scanning equipment, tables, and public access computers as "hot spots" with high touch surfaces in confined areas. Clean these areas frequently.
- Staff checking out library materials should either wear gloves or use disinfectant. Clean/disinfect barcode scanners regularly. Equipment should be cleaned in between each staff use.
- Patrons should bring minimal items into the library.
- Limit the number of patrons in the library at any one time to your library's established person per square footage measurements and the library's ability to staff and manage patrons
- Do not share pens, paper or other materials.

Public Access Computing

- Ensure computers are updated and in good working order to minimize close contact during patron use
- Ensure physical distancing while computers are in use. Remove computers, chairs, desks to accomplish this. Access to other public technology resources like scanning stations, photocopiers, printers should also be reviewed for physical distancing, cleaning, and practicality purposes.
- Larger libraries with public access computer areas should establish perimeters around areas of normal congregation, indicate start of queue, waiting areas, etc.)
- Libraries may adopt scheduling computer use by appointment. Laptops and tablets can allow for easier cleaning.
- Exchangeable keyboard covers may provide easier disinfecting routines.

Reference Services and/or Other In-person Library Consultations

- Provide services virtually by utilizing online video conferencing, or via phone or email to minimize face-to-face interactions. Reference and other consultation services can be done remotely.
- In building library services should be arranged by appointment or call ahead to minimize the time staff and patron are together in close proximity.
- In-building library services should be provided in areas with chairs, desks arranged for appropriate physical distancing and privacy for patrons.
- Limit patrons utilizing reference or other services in the library at any one time to library's established person per square footage limits. Reference Desks and other service areas are high-

touch surfaces and need regular wiping down. Do not share pens.

- Operate with reduced number of reference and other staff in the building when feasible.
- Conduct all reference work with books, paper and other items in a spacious area for patron to review. Reduce back and forth handling of materials. Maintain physical distance of 6 feet minimum.

Considerations and Guidance for Library Programming

Library Programming

Before returning to in-person programming, the Maine State Library urges libraries to consider multiple factors before making final decisions. Guidance on holding in-person library programming in Maine is based on CDC, Maine Executive orders and state and federal safety organizations.

State of Maine Guidelines: Although Maine is in Phase 4, Executive Orders may impact guidance in response to level of infection and positivity rate throughout the state.

Physical distancing and size of space, face coverings, audience/participants and length of programs should all be examined closely.

- Avoid special events/promotions that could draw large numbers of library patrons to your building or property at one time. If large gatherings are planned, follow current state guidance.
- Consider carefully indoor/winter library programming with HVAC, flu COVID spread and patron movements during programming. Physical distancing must be maintained and facilitated entrance and exits should be practiced.
- Continue or initiate virtual programming as an alternative to in-library programs.
- Adhere to all current guidance as it relates to maximum number of people that can gather in a physical space at one time.
- The number of individuals that can gather in a shared space must not exceed the limit established by the Governor's Executive Order and the guidance set forth on the DECD Checklist website for Indoor and Outdoor Gatherings
- Is your library meeting space large enough to hold the number of people for the program you want to do?
- Will attendees be older and likely to have underlying conditions?

Building/Physical Space:

Your building and current Executive Orders will determine how you may offer in the library building programming.

The realities of room size may be an obstacle to safe children's programming. Fifty (50) may be the magic indoor number but 6 foot physical distancing must also be observed not only in the library but in any room where programming, is held, including the children's room.

Guidance from the Governor's most recent Executive Order dated November 4 , 2020 continues to set limits to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors **and fewer if the space cannot accommodate 5 people per 1,000 feet** of visitor-accessible space.

Outdoor Gatherings: The limit on the number of persons for outdoor gatherings is 5 people per 1,000 sq. ft of occupiable outdoor space or not more than 100 persons **whichever is less.**

Indoor Gatherings: The limit on the number of persons for indoor gatherings **remains at 50 persons** and
fewer if the space cannot accommodate 5 people per 1,000 sq. ft. feet of visitor-accessible space.

Before scheduling programming, measure space and determine what programming, if any, can be held safely and in compliance with physical distancing minimum requirements. Maintaining physical distancing of **6 feet and wearing face coverings are the primary tools to avoid transmission of respiratory droplets between individuals**. If a space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the six-foot distancing requirement, attendance must be limited to allow for such compliance or program should not be held. Utilize tools so you have the square footage of rooms or programming spaces in your library to determine feasibility for each program. How big is 1,000 square feet? Square footage calculator

Colorado Physical distancing space calculator. In order to maintain at least 6 feet of separation from each other you need to take in account the unpredictable dynamics of each person's movement, this calculator uses a 12-foot grid distribution. Calculator by Calconic.
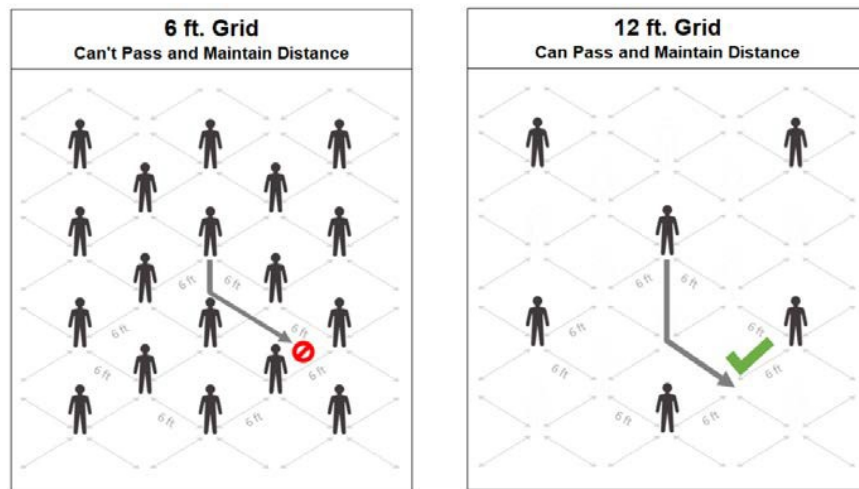
While 5 visitors per 1,000 square feet is the maximum number at this time, libraries should consider the following factors that can increase transmission risk in their building and may decide to set a lower capacity limit, such as 3 per 1,000 square feet, if present:

- Poor ventilation, i.e. little outside air circulating in (more on ventilation below)
- Confined spaces that make physical distancing difficult

Federal CDC Guidelines

Community, Work & School: Considerations for Events and Gatherings

This CDC Planner can help you think though questions you may or may not be thinking about.

Children's Programming

Children find it difficult to maintain physical distancing. It is recommended that if in building children's programming is held that it be closely monitored for compliance.

- Story time, children's craft and programming should not be planned unless a library is assured that parents can control children's movements in the library.
- Space all seating to at least six feet apart.
- Consider use of ground markings and other cueing tools to help children maintain physical distancing in group settings. Children count in the number of people allowable in your building.
- Singing is a high-risk activity and may spread the virus, therefore, refrain from singing during face to face story time until the virus is well under control and public health guidance has been provided.
- Consider continuing or starting virtual storytime, online activities, make and take items, etc.
- Youth librarians may glean further insight into best practices by looking CDC Guidance for childcare Programs.
- The Maine DECD checklist for museums features Special Considerations for Children's Programming is helpful for librarians.
- Questions to ask before scheduling programming

  1. Is your children's room large enough to hold 5 kids? (1000 sq. ft. of occupiable space)
  2. Is teen space large enough for teens to physically distance?

Face Coverings Required for Children's Programming

The Governor has repealed previous Exec Orders regarding face coverings for children.

"Exceptions to Face Coverings for Children. The exceptions provided in section V.B. of Executive Order 49 FY 19/20 for "children under the age of 2" and "a child in a child-care setting" **are repealed and replaced by the following:**

"Face coverings are **recommended** for children ages 2 to 4 unless deemed developmentally inappropriate. Face coverings are **required** for all children age 5 and older in public settings, including school and child care settings."

- By definition, public libraries are public settings.
- Cloth face coverings are not a replacement for adhering to physical distancing protocols.

Example:

A library would like to start hosting storytimes at the library again. According to Maine's current guidance, gatherings of up to 50 people indoors are allowed right now but only if 6 foot physical distancing is met. Storytime at the library would be in the CDC's "more risk" category. Using the room space calculator, if you have a room that measures 400 square (approximately 20 x 20 ft. space) and for everyone to be 6 feet apart, you can only allow 2 people in the space at once, including yourself. Forgo programming that involves singing.

Considerations regarding Liability Issues and COVID

The Maine State Library (MSL) checked with the Maine Attorney General's Office and other legal resources. No one really knows where litigation over liability in the case of contracting COVID will go. The important legal concepts and phrases are highlighted in yellow and MSL comments are in bold.

Any library with specific liability concerns should **consult a lawyer.**

• The major impediment to successfully suing anyone is causation . . . how can you know that your case of COVID was caused by the negligence of another. ***How could it be tied to a library visit or book?***

• Maine has not enacted any sort of protection from liability around COVID **via legislation or Executive Order.** There is existing law regarding general immunity for municipalities.

• The issue of common touch items (fomites) has not been as big of a topic of discussion in K-12 education as it has been in libraries but see the Maine CDC Guidance for schools and PK-12 and Adult Education Public Health Guidance (see Shared Objects, and Music sections).

• When MSL established a "quarantine" period for books in the ILL system, we were essentially creating a "standard of care" for handling ILL materials. What that means is that if an ILL participant follows the quarantine period established, libraries can argue that they have followed the applicable "standard of care" and are, therefore, not acting negligently – which would be the **core of the complaint**. *Therefore, a library can say they treated their collection and ILL materials according to established guidance from the Maine State Library.*

Additional liability information was provided by Ann Freeman at the HR During COVID webinar at Fall Council. Most liability issues nationally have been around employment issues. You can listen to the webinar and review the slides for information.

Guidance on Contact Tracing

Note: Local governance may require such collection. ***Collecting the least amount of contact data is recommended***

Guidance on collection of contact tracing information in Maine libraries based on the Public and Community Building Checklist recommendations, the most current CDC definition of close contact and patron privacy considerations.

Libraries should not feel compelled to gather data from patrons entering the building for contact tracing purposes **unless** a library staff person has been in close proximity (less than 6 ft.) of a patron or vendor for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. If that occurs, collecting the least amount of contact data would be recommended. Name and email address – or – Name and phone #. Libraries should destroy data after 14 days has passed.
MSL believes this practice conforms with the intent of the State of Maine's Public and Community Building Guidance,

For more information: [The Privacy Perils of Contact Tracing in Libraries](#)