

## **RYE FREE READING ROOM PANDEMIC, EPIDEMIC, PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN, AND/OR PUBLIC INFECTION CONCERN RESPONSE PLAN**

### **Purpose**

This protocol is created to provide guidance in the event of a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or similar public infection concern (hereafter referred to as a pandemic) in limiting, closing, and re-establishing library services.

If there is a pandemic, Rye Free Reading Room (RFRR) must plan for the well-being of staff and public, and for staff being unable to report to work. In addition, during a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern, the Rye Free Reading Room may be required to take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness including:

- Closing down by order of local public health officials
- Limiting or canceling social and public gatherings
- Limiting or canceling library sponsored programs and events
- Requiring quarantines and/or other social distancing measures
- Requiring staff and public to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)

Recovery from a disease outbreak may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or some other physical crises. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the Rye Free Reading Room can be maintained for several weeks or more with limited staff and reduced hours due to a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern.

This plan is different from a general emergency preparedness policy or procedure. An emergency preparedness policy assumes that staff will return to the building, or begin rebuilding, almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire, storm, or utility outage). If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more.

## Section 1 - Library Operations

**Continuity of Services:** Rye Free Reading Room utilizes reputable, up to date scientific and public health guidance to inform operations during an event. The Library will maintain services to the greatest extent possible while simultaneously working to provide facilities for staff and the public that conform to best practices and cooperating with the City of Rye and public health authorities.

**Public Health Measures:** Rye Free Reading Room is committed to providing facilities to public and for staff that meet the best practices of health and hygiene standards for public use spaces. Based on recommendations from the City of Rye, Westchester County, the State of New York's Division of Library Development, Center for Disease Control (CDC), or other public health authorities, RFRR may decide to:

- Temporarily increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing in its facilities, especially areas and surfaces that experience the highest use, with the understanding that no amount of reasonable effort can ever guarantee that public places are free of infectious agents
  - Post signs in restrooms and throughout the building encouraging hand washing, social distancing, and routine practices that help minimize the spread of germs from person to person
  - Provide public and staff with convenient access to hand sanitizer, hand washing facilities, disinfecting wipes, face coverings, and other PPE
  - Institute social distancing measures, such as arranging furniture so that there is at least six feet of distance between people
  - Provide staff with latex gloves, and training in their use when handling materials
  - Emphasize good hygiene habits and personal responsibility in preventing the spread of disease. Staff and visitors should follow the CDC guidelines which aim to slow the spread of germs in these ways:
    - Stay home if you are sick
    - Keep your children home from school or daycare, and away from the Library, if they are sick
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- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Cough into your shoulder or the bend of your arm
- If you use a tissue, throw it away in the trash right away and then wash your hands
- Wash your hands frequently throughout the day for 30 seconds with soap and water
- Use an alcohol hand sanitizer if you can't find soap and water
- Get a flu shot for the seasonal flu as well as the vaccine for the pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern disease when it becomes available

**Temporary Reduction, Restriction, or Suspension of Services:** During the course of an event, public health authorities may advise that libraries and other gathering places minimize or entirely suspend situations where numerous individuals congregate in relatively confined spaces. In such cases the Director may decide to temporarily discontinue library programs and use of Library meeting rooms and other areas of the building.

In addition:

- Individuals of all age who are practicing self-quarantine should not visit the Rye Free Reading Room
  - Use of games, toys, video games, and activity kits will be suspended
  - In the event that any Rye City School District school is closed due to pandemic or epidemic, Rye Free Reading Room's Teen Center and Children's Room will also close to the public
  - Disinfecting and/or cleaning procedures issued by public health officials or the City of Rye will be followed
  - Individuals of all ages who are directed to self-quarantine will not be allowed use of the Rye Free Reading Room
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**Temporary Library Building Closure:** The Rye Free Reading Room building will close due to an event when a mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by the City of Rye or government officials on the county or state level.

At the discretion of the Library Director, in consultation with the Library Board President, and City of Rye officials, the Rye Free Reading Room may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily in the event that:

- There is not sufficient staff to maintain basic library service levels
- Any other condition exists which prevents RFRR from operating safely and effectively

## **Section 2 - Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services**

Rye Free Reading Room provides crucial resources and services to residents and strives to minimize negative impacts on access to resources and services resulting from procedures adopted in response to an event.

**Online Access to Information:** Rye Free Reading Room will work to preserve access to its online resources remotely. RFRR will maintain access to its Internet site, subscription databases, digital content, and online catalog. In the event the library building is unavailable for weeks or months, RFRR will invest more of its materials budget in its digital collections.

**Reference Services:** If the library building is closed, RFRR staff will continue to provide reference and information services through email, text and telephone.

**Programs:** If the library building is closed, RFRR staff will continue to provide programming for all age groups via an easily accessible online platform.

**Public Information:** RFRR will use its existing digital publications, including e-newsletters and email blasts, to keep the public aware of changes in programs and services.

**Access to Computers in the Library:** RFRR strives to maintain public internet access insofar as it is possible to do so under any set of operating circumstances. When possible, in coordination, the RFRR will consider alternatives to complete suspension of public computing, depending on emerging conditions and recommendations from health officials. Measures might include provision of washable keyboards, disinfectant wipes, social distancing measures to increase space between simultaneous computer users, and, potentially, disposable gloves.

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**Suspension of Due Dates and Fines:** In the event of a temporary closure of the library, RFRR will extend or suspend all due dates, and suspend all late fees. Any such suspension would be distributed on library and local media channels, and additional messaging would encourage the public to keep borrowed items in their homes until further notice. This prevents customers from feeling obligated to travel while sick to return materials, and prevents jammed bookdrops.

**Material Handling:** RFRR will minimize the handling of Library material by staff during a pandemic. Materials should be borrowed through self-check machines and returned through book drops. Returned materials may be quarantined for up to 72 hours before returned items are checked in and re-shelved. All payments must be made by debit or credit card. RFRR may choose to suspend interlibrary loan from the Westchester Library System.

### **Section 3 - Staffing**

Given the size and layout of the library, approximately 19,000 square feet on three floors, 9 employees must be available for a maximum 7:12 hour workday consisting of a 36-hour workweek for general operations. At least 5 employees must be available for the Library to establish normal hours Monday to Thursday, 9:30 am to 8 pm; 3 employees for Friday, 9:30 to 5:30, 3 employees for Saturday, 9:30 am to 5 pm; and 3 employees for Sunday service, 12 to 5 pm.

An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level will result in reduced hours, services changes, or closures. Staff absence will determine the ability to carry out services and maintain open hours.

Service changes may include:

- Cancellation of all programs, outreach, events, and meeting room reservations
  - Employees may be reallocated and have shifts reassigned to provide coverage on all floors during open hours
  - Reduction in open hours if number of employees falls below temporary minimum level
  - Closure of the Library for one or more days if number of employees further declines or only minimum level can be met for five or more day
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**Prioritization of Services:** If a reduction in staffing, open hours, or services is required, employees shall perform priority responsibilities that most directly impact patrons prior to any other work tasks.

1. Direct patron assistance: check out; issuing Library cards; reference assistance; facility and collection supervision and maintenance
2. Patron related-tasks: check in; incoming delivery; shelving, holds list

Employees with non-public service tasks should consult with their manager for guidance and temporary assignments / work priorities. Individual responsibilities outside of those described shall be completed after these prioritized tasks, if time permits, performing those duties with a deadline or significant impact first. Employees should consult with the Director or designated administrative authority to determine staffing area assignment and which individual work tasks should take priority, or in the event that they feel a responsibility not listed here requires urgent attention.

#### **Section 4 - Communication**

In the event of closure necessitated by a pandemic, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours is of the utmost importance. The library director or director's designee will follow the Rye Free Reading Room Emergency Closing Procedures for media contacts and telephone contacts.

#### **Section 5 - Employee Attendance**

General work rules and attendance policies are outlined in the Rye Free Reading Room Employee Handbook.

- Employees should pay close attention to all communications from the library director and any other communications from their supervisor.
  - If the Rye Free Reading Room is open, healthy employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, according to the RFRR Employee Handbook, with the understanding that they may be temporarily reassigned during the emergency period.
  - Staff members should direct any questions to their manager.
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## **Section 6 - Library Building Re-opening, A Phased Response**

The re-opening of the Rye Free Reading Room building, and the expansion of library services, will come at the direction of the Library Director, informed by directives from the City of Rye, Westchester County, and the State of New York, and the opinion from the Health Department of Westchester County, State of New York, the State of New York's Division of Library Development, Center for Disease Control, and other public health authorities.

Return to the library building will not mean an immediate return to a pre-pandemic environment. This undertaking will happen in five phases, guided by best practices for the well-being of staff members and the public. Best practice protocols will be in place, and will be modified as needed. An incremental service restoration will help minimize future disruptions in service.

Phased re-opening and full pre-pandemic services may take a significant amount to restore, possibly up to two years. The development of a successful prevention and treatment options, such as a vaccine, are key to full operation.

In addition, throughout the phased re-opening, there is a strong possibility of reversion to early phases of operation if the rate of infection increases and government mandates to shelter in place are reinstated.

### **Phase One**

Staff members return to the building to prepare for the re-opening of the building. The building is closed to the public. The book drop is reopened 24/7.

- o Timeframe: a minimum of one week before the building re-opens to the public.
  - o Context: The stay-at-home order is lifted by state and local authorities for the phase that includes libraries. Physical distancing and PPE are required of staff, and three months of PPE and sanitation supplies are on hand.
  - o Summary: Library staff work to prepare the building according to best practices, including the implementation of social distancing, reconfiguration of public and staff space, new signage, and reduced technology. Public services points, like reference and circulation, are redesigned utilizing temporary plastic walls and barriers. Procedures to eliminate or minimize high touch areas and physical interaction are implemented.
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- o Staff are expected to wear PPE and will be trained in use of PPE and new hygiene procedures.
- o Circulation: Material will be returned via the external book drop, and material will be quarantined for 72 hours then checked in and re-shelved. Material owned by other libraries will be returned to them; however, there will not be interlibrary loan requests through the Westchester Library System.
- o Reference Services: Will continue via phone, text, and email.
- o Programs: Will continue on the virtual platform.
- o Some staff will continue to work both onsite and from home at their manager's discretion.

## **Phase Two**

The building is closed to the public. Curbside service is available for materials. Library laptops will be available for use outside the building on the patio. External book drops are open 24/7.

- o Context: Stay-at-home order is lifted by state and local authorities. Physical distancing and PPE are required of staff and public, and there is a three month supply of PPE and sanitation supplies on hand.
  - o Summary: the Library will open primarily to lend materials and for brief computer sessions. Holds will be fulfilled utilizing the Rye Free Reading Room collection. According to best practices, the library will:
    - o Reconfigure the staff workroom and service desks to support social distancing
    - o Eliminate services that cannot be achieved through social distancing, such as replacing in-person computer assistance with screen sharing or other conferencing tools
    - o Operating hours may be changed due to usage and demand
  - o Circulation: Materials will be available through curbside pickup, and returns through the book drop. Material will be quarantined for 72 hours then checked in and re-shelved. Payments can only be made with credit card.
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- o Reference Services: Patrons can make appointments for one-on-one virtual consultations. Telephone, texting and email references will continue.
- o Programs: Will continue on the virtual platform. There will be no in-person classes or room rentals. Program partners will be hosted online.
- o Staff will continue to work both onsite and from home at their manager's discretion.

### **Phase Three**

Additional services will be added.

Anticipated Date: dependent on local and state assessment of risk.

- o Context: Physical distancing is still recommended, but infections have significantly declined. PPE and sanitizing supplies are predictable and plentiful.
  - o Summary: Some seating is introduced to public areas but configured to allow for physical distance. Computers are accessible at socially distant intervals. Westchester Library System interlibrary loan will be reintroduced to provide expanded holds capabilities.
  - o Circulation: The Library will continue circulating material through curbside pickups and self-checks, and returns through the book drop and material will be quarantined for 72 hours then checked in and re-shelved. In-person assistance will be limited. Patrons borrowing material will have to adhere to designated social distancing. Payments can only be made with credit card.
  - o Reference Services: Staffing at service desks will expand. Patrons will still be encouraged to book one-on-one sessions with staff. Telephone, texting and email references will continue.
  - o Programs: Will continue on the virtual platform. There will be no in-person classes or room rentals.
  - o Public behavior: The public will be required to wear masks. Gloves may be worn at the patron's discretion. Social distancing, especially on lines, will be in effect. PPE and social distancing will be enforced by staff; patrons who refuse to comply will be removed from the Library and banned.
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- o Staff will continue to work both onsite and from home at their manager's discretion.

#### **Phase Four**

Anticipated Date: dependent on local and state assessment of risk

- o Context: Infection threat is low. Physical distancing guidelines have been relaxed. PPE may become optional for some staff.
- o Summary: All seating and computers are returned to the public service floors.
- o Circulation: Will continue to emphasize self-checkout and return by book drop. Curbside pickup use will be reviewed. Payment can be made by cash and credit card. Quarantining of materials may be lifted.
- o Reference Services. All service points fully staffed and all services restored. Virtual reference service will continue.
- o Programs: Allow for smaller group programs for all ages. There may be limitations on larger group gatherings. No room rentals. Many programs will continue on the virtual platform or blend in-person and virtual attendance.

#### **Phase Five**

Anticipated Date: dependent on local and state assessment of risk.

- o Context: Infection threat is considered very low or non-existent, there are successful medical treatments or a vaccine.
  - o Summary: While all services will be restored to their pre-pandemic levels, the experience of the pandemic will continue to inform library operations. This will include heightened awareness of personal and building hygiene and the retention of distance in interactions, such as meeting online.
  - o Programs: Larger group gatherings for meetings or library programs are allowed. Room rentals are reinstated. Staff can resume outreach, community engagement, class visits, off-site programs.
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## Section 7 - Staff Health

A successful reopening will require the commitment of everyone to create a healthy environment. In addition to the public health measures outlined in Section 1 - Library Operations, the following measures should be applied at all levels of reopening, from Phase One through Phase Five.

- Staff will be provided with PPE and sanitary and cleaning products. When face covers are required, a fresh face covering should be utilized every day and the previous one laundered. If a staff member chooses to use gloves, he or she should replace the gloves several times a day and continue to wash their hands regularly.
- Regular cleaning of all public spaces will take place at the end of each day.
- Staff members are expected to disinfect personal areas, shared workspaces—such as service desks—when ending a shift, and commonly touched items in staff areas such as copy machines, coffee pot handles, microwaves, refrigerator handles, and more.
- Staff should avoid meeting people face-to-face. Staff members are encouraged to use the telephone, online conferencing, e-mail, or instant messaging to conduct business as much as possible.
- Unavoidable in-person meetings should be short and held in meeting room where people can sit at least six feet from each other. Hand shaking is prohibited.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel. Seek out online training opportunities.
- Do not congregate in work rooms, staff rooms, or other areas. Keep six feet apart at all times.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 19, 2020.