

Infectious Disease Pandemic Response Plan



**PUEBLO CITY-COUNTY
LIBRARY**
Ideas • Imagination • Information

Pueblo City-County Library District

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I. Purpose and Rationale

From the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

CDC is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in 60 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a “[public health emergency of international concern](#)” (PHEIC). On January 31, 2020, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency (PHE) for the United States to aid the nation’s healthcare community in responding to COVID-19. (Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>, accessed March 2, 2020.)

This plan is established by the Pueblo City-County Library District (PCCLD) in response to threats posed by the COVID-19 virus as well as other highly infectious diseases with potential for pandemic. PCCLD seeks a measured and responsible reaction to potential pandemic. This plan represents PCCLD’s commitment to provide library services to the public in the safest and most effective way possible during a period of pandemic illness with public health and safety the primary concern along with the goal of business operations continuity so far as possible.

The local, national and international conditions of pandemic illness may change on a daily basis. The current situation regarding COVID-19 is dynamic and currently developing rapidly. PCCLD’s response is subject to modification based upon the best and most current information and shifting conditions. Therefore, this plan is subject to change as PCCLD identifies the most effective responses to the conditions.

PCCLD maintains long-term, vital partnerships with Colorado State University-Pueblo, Pueblo Community College, and Pueblo School District 70 for delivery of certain public library services on various campuses operated and owned by these respective institutions. These public library services are secondary to the primary educational purposes of these institutions. In matters of mutual interest related to these campus operations and services, PCCLD will defer to the administrations of these institutions to reach decisions regarding operations there.

II. Coordination with Public Health Authorities and Local Government

According to the CDC this is how COVID-19 spreads:

Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. (Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>, accessed March 3, 2020)

An effective response to pandemic requires ongoing coordination with public health authorities and other local governments. PCCLD will formulate its response to the threat posed by COVID-19 in cooperation with local, state and national health authorities and in consultation with local city and county governments. This plan is based on recommendations from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe>) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (<https://www.cdc.gov/>). PCCLD also is working with the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment.

Communications, both internal and external, are a critical component of PCCLD's response. PCCLD is committed to communicating in a timely and accurate manner with the public, staff, public health entities, the media and community partners. PCCLD will continually monitor external factors, update procedures based upon the latest and best information available, and communicate changes as effectively as possible.

PCCLD will work to insure that all library staff members understand PCCLD's plans and procedures. Pandemic illness is frequently a source of considerable anxiety. Educating staff by sharing the most current and accurate information available is the most effective way to reduce anxiety.

- To inform staff, PCCLD will:
 - Keep staff apprised via email and the staff Internet portal in order to help staff understand District procedures, and assist staff in communicating plans and procedures to the public. PCCLD also will utilize its internal chain-of-command to communicate with staff.
 - Invite questions from staff regarding plans, and afford staff the opportunity throughout the pandemic response period to express concerns and suggestions.
 - Respond to staff questions and comments as soon as possible.
- In an effort to inform the public, PCCLD will:
 - Post relevant information about PCCLD's pandemic response on its website, social media, and/or via Internet email lists.

- Post relevant information in libraries.
- Respond to questions from members of the public as soon as possible.
- Inform the public via local media and the PCCLD website and other means of relevant changes to library operations and procedures.
- PCCLD representatives will network cooperatively with public health authorities, local governmental and educational entities, and other organizations and groups in the community.
- The District will look for best practices from and work cooperatively with regional, state and national library organizations and public libraries.

III. Library Operations

- Continuity of Services

PCCLD seeks a balanced, responsible approach to operations informed by the best and latest science and public health guidance available. There are obvious risks in failing to prepare and respond adequately to the threat presented by pandemic disease agents. However, significant changes to library operations and services have the potential to disrupt operations more than the effects of pandemic illness alone. PCCLD will consider costs and benefits to residents and staff regarding proposed changes to procedure. Please see Section V., “Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services,” below for further details.

PCCLD will maintain continuity of library services to the greatest extent possible while working to provide safe facilities and cooperating with public health authorities.

- Public Health Measures [Also to be used by staff as talking points with the public]

PCCLD is committed to providing safe and sanitary facilities for the public and for library staff. Based upon recommendations from state and local health authorities, the Centers for Disease Control, or other public health authorities, PCCLD may decide to temporarily increase the frequency and type of cleaning and sanitizing in its facilities, especially areas and surfaces that experience higher use.

However, no amount of reasonable effort can ever guarantee that public places are free of infectious agents, including, potentially, the COVID-19 virus. Even a recently cleaned and disinfected surface can potentially transmit disease once touched by a sick person. With thousands of visitors a day to our public facilities, PCCLD encourages individuals to take preventative measures as a necessary component in minimizing public health risks in the library.

PCCLD emphasizes prevention and individual responsibility for taking steps that contribute to keeping well and helping prevent the spread of infectious illness. To that end, PCCLD provides public and staff with convenient access

to hand sanitizer, hand washing facilities, disinfecting wipes, latex/nitrile gloves and facial tissues in all of our facilities. The District will post signs in restrooms encouraging hand washing and routine sanitation practices that help minimize the spread of infectious illness from person to person.

- Temporary Reduction or Suspension of Services

During the course of a pandemic, public health authorities may advise or mandate that libraries and other public gathering places minimize or avoid conditions where numerous individuals congregate in relatively confined spaces. In such cases, the Executive Director or his/her designee may temporarily discontinue library programs and/or services as well as use of library meeting rooms by the public or other similar measures.

- Temporary Closure of PCCLD Facilities

Closure of one or more of PCCLD's libraries will be at the discretion of the Executive Director or his/her designee. PCCLD libraries may be closed temporarily under one or more of the following conditions:

- Public health authorities advise, request or order such closure.
- The closure of local public schools.
- Public visitation is too low to warrant keeping libraries open.
- Too few staff members are available to operate libraries.
- The closure of other local public institutions or businesses.
- Any other conditions that prevent PCCLD from operating public facilities safely and effectively.

IV. Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services

PCCLD provides crucial resources and services to residents. PCCLD will strive to minimize negative impacts on access to resources and services resulting from procedures adopted in response to pandemic illness.

PCCLD will work to preserve access to its online resources both in its libraries and remotely. Residents with Internet access can use PCCLD's online resources remotely and when libraries are closed. PCCLD will strive to maintain access to its digital resources such as its Internet site, subscription databases, online catalog and collections of digital books and other media even in the event that PCCLD's physical facilities are closed temporarily.

PCCLD recognizes that some residents lack home computers or Internet connectivity and rely on the public library to provide free Internet access. While PCCLD libraries remain open, PCCLD will strive to maintain public Internet access insofar as it is possible to do so safely.

In coordination with health authorities, PCCLD will consider alternatives to the complete suspension of public computing, depending on emerging conditions. Measures might include provision of disinfectant wipes, social distancing

measures to increase space between simultaneous computer users, latex gloves and other measures.

In the event of a temporary closure of the library, PCCLD may suspend all due dates, suspend all late fees or both. PCCLD will use its Internet site, social media, library email distribution lists and work with local media to publicize any such suspension. PCCLD will encourage the public to keep checked out items in their homes until further notice. A suspension would be advantageous for a number of reasons. It would help prevent libraries from being inundated with returned materials while no items were getting checked out. It would prevent customers from feeling a need to venture to the library to return materials, as a suspension would provide assurance that no fines would accrue on items currently checked out. Outdoor return drops could be closed during a period of closure due to overflow problems.

Potential Procedures with Significant Negative Impacts on Library Operations

- Quarantine on recently returned items

While perhaps unlikely, it is possible that a quarantine period on recently-returned materials is recommended by public health authorities. PCCLD will consider how such a process might be implemented as well as how operational problems might be addressed.

At the time of this report no specific data is available on the viability of COVID-19 on objects, or its transmissibility via objects such as books. Regarding other coronaviruses, there seems to be variation from hours to many days in the reported durations of viability of the COVID-19 virus on various objects. (See for example CDC FAQs at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>).

A quarantine period on returned materials of several hours or longer would disrupt normal operations significantly. Checking in and shelving of returned materials would be delayed. Secure temporary storage areas and additional, movable bins would likely be needed. Required space for such procedures is not readily available in all of our libraries. A materials quarantine might necessitate closure of one or more of our meeting rooms for the duration of the procedure. In contemplating such a significant departure from normal operations, PCCLD will consider both the practicality of proposed measures, and the actual, rather than presumed, public health benefits, in consultation with authorities.

- Disinfecting and cleaning of all returned library items

The suggestion might arise that a procedure be implemented that staff clean each returned item at the time of check in. Such measures might be implemented, as necessary, however, due to the inordinate amount of time required, such a procedure could be disruptive to the point of slowing library operations. In addition, while surface covers of library items might potentially be cleaned it is not possible to disinfect each page of returned books. Finally, effective disinfecting methods such as heat, liquids and gels could likely damage or destroy library items, especially with repeated application.

Even if one or both of the processes above were implemented---quarantining and individual disinfecting---the items would be subject to being touched again by members of the public as soon as they were re-shelved.

- Closed stacks

Nearly all stacks at PCCLD are open, which means that library users have direct and free access to shelves where books, CDs, DVDs and other items are stored, and are able to retrieve items themselves. Health officials or others might suggest that PCCLD implement a system of “closed” stacks for a period of time. In a closed stack arrangement only staff can access shelved materials, and staff must retrieve requested materials for the public.

Such a system would be disruptive for any of our libraries given the physical arrangement of PCCLD facilities and current workflow processes. Both have been designed to facilitate self-directed service. A closed stack system would be highly difficult, time consuming and inefficient to implement in PCCLD libraries. This procedure will be considered, as warranted, with these issues in mind.

V. Library Staff

- General

PCCLD is committed to communicating with staff regarding its pandemic illness plans to insure that all staff members understand the procedures and their role in PCCLD’s response. PCCLD will make every effort to respond to staff concerns and questions and will consider revising procedures based on continuing dialog with staff members throughout PCCLD.

- Personnel Policies and Procedures

During a pandemic many human resources questions regarding staffing and personnel matters will arise.

PCCLD’s Human Resources will inform PCCLD’s response to relevant issues such as paid time off, sick leave and return from sick leave, FMLA, emergency leave, extended benefits, working from home, and related matters. Existing policies will govern all such decisions unless and until PCCLD’s Board of Trustees modifies the policies.

- Prevention and Personal Responsibility

The emphasis of PCCLD’s response is on good hygiene habits and personal responsibility in preventing the spread of infectious illness. PCCLD encourages staff to follow the CDC guidelines, which aim to slow the spread of infectious diseases. As with other respiratory viruses, it is recommended for people to protect themselves and others by practicing certain everyday actions:

- Clean hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or into your elbow.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home if you are sick.

- Get an annual flu vaccine if you have not had one. (Although COVID-19 is not an influenza virus, and the flu vaccine is not a vaccine for COVID-19, an annual flu shot is recommended as a general method to reduce occurrence of infectious disease.)
- For further guidelines regarding individuals infected with COVID-19 specifically, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>.

- Continuity of Services with Minimal Staffing

PCCLD managers and administration will develop continuity of service plans with reduced, less-than-optimal staffing levels. They will identify methods of staffing desks and service areas within PCCLD facilities and providing a basic level of service should illness temporarily reduce PCCLD's available workforce during pandemic.

- Library Closures

In the event that some but not all PCCLD libraries are closed, managers will first work to identify any necessary tasks for employees to perform at the facility or facilities remaining open. Employees from closed facilities may be reassigned to open facilities if productive work is available. Depending upon the nature of the closure, selected staff may continue to work in PCCLD facilities to perform tasks related to continuity of services. Potential on-site work tasks during a public closure might include:

- Collections inventory
- Processing and cataloging
- Retrospective spine labeling for materials on shelves
- Insure collections are in correct order by shelf reading the spine labels on materials
- Collection management
- Computer and network maintenance and support (internal and external)
- Shifting collections
- Self guided computer training opportunities for staff on software and online resources
- Materials repair
- Building projects and repairs
- Mailing out materials from the library
- Providing telephone reference from various locations, possibly reassigning staff to expand this service
- Providing online reference
- Administrative activities

In the event of either a partial or complete closure of PCCLD facilities, the type and amount of paid and unpaid leave available to employees will be determined by the District's personnel policies (see PCCLD Employee Guidelines)

<https://www.pueblolibrary.org/sites/default/files/Policies/employeeguidelines.pdf> “02.09.09 Emergency Closings”) .

- Working from Home

In the event of a partial or complete closure of PCCLD, or if an emerging situation related to pandemic influenza warrants it, PCCLD may consider temporary work-at-home possibilities for some staff who have been identified as essential personnel to deliver critical processes and functions. This may be supported by specially authorized remote computer access into PCCLD’s telecommunications and computers systems. Temporary work-from-home for any employee requires advance approval of the Executive Director or her/his designee.