

## Office of Commonwealth Libraries Framework for Reopening Public Libraries

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### Introduction

Consistent with [Governor Tom Wolf's process to reopen the commonwealth](#), the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Commonwealth Libraries directs public libraries to develop plans to reopen local public library facilities that are based upon the three-phase matrix listed below. When developing plans, libraries are encouraged to work cooperatively to ensure safe and consistent policies and practices within their county.

Pennsylvania plans to proceed with returning to work cautiously. Broad reopenings or reopenings that are not structured around ongoing social distancing, universal masking, or other public health guidance, could result in a spike of cases and new stay-at-home and closure orders. Therefore, libraries, like all other organizations and businesses, will follow a phased-in process that begins with limited services and moves toward full operation over time.

The administration has categorized reopening into three broad phases: red, yellow, or green. These designations signal how counties and/or regions may begin easing some restrictions on work, congregate settings, and social interactions:

- The **Red Phase** has the sole purpose of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 through strict social distancing, closures of non-life sustaining businesses and schools, and building safety protocols.
- As regions or counties move into the **Yellow Phase**, some restrictions on work and social interactions will ease while others, such as limitations around large gatherings, remain in place.
- The **Green Phase** eases most restrictions by lifting the stay-at-home and business closure orders to allow the economy to strategically reopen while continuing to prioritize public health.

Phases are assigned based on conditions in a county, counties, or region. Phases are assigned by the commonwealth.

Any library that advances to a new phase before being designated as such by the commonwealth risks placing their community and operations (including certificates of occupancy and insurance status) at risk.

### Changing Conditions May Trigger Restrictive Color Designations

Depending on the public health and economic conditions facing regions or counties, there could be additional actions, orders, or guidance that is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of

Education (PDE) or Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) as a county or region is designated red, yellow, or green.

Some counties or regions may not experience a straight path from a red designation, to a yellow, and then a green designation. Instead, cycling back and forth between less restrictive to more restrictive designations may occur as public health indicators improve or worsen. **This means that each library will need to be ready to respond to changing conditions and include those scenarios in their local reopening plans.**

## Three-Phase Reopening Matrix

In all cases, local library reopening plans should prioritize the health and safety of both staff and the public by using the guidelines listed in the three-phase matrix below.

When creating library reopening plans, libraries may modify their budgets and operations to use their State Aid in the areas that will best support service to the community for the remainder of the calendar year.

Library reopening plans that do not meet Pennsylvania Public Library Code standards due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 public health crisis will not jeopardize their library's eligibility for next year's State Aid.

The Office of Commonwealth Libraries will review changes in library budget plans and operations due to COVID-19 by requiring each library to submit a revised 2020 Plan for the Use of State Aid later this year at a date-to-be-determined.

District Library Center staff and System administrators shall also be consulted to advise and assist libraries with local plan development.

### Red Phase

The red phase has the sole purpose of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 through strict social distancing, non-life sustaining business closures, and building safety protocols.

<b>RED PHASE</b>
<b>WORK &amp; CONGREGATE SETTING RESTRICTIONS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Library operations that provide routine, in-person library services are prohibited.</li><li>2. Essential library personnel can visit the library to sustain facility integrity, security of collections, or continuity of operations (e.g. payroll, invoice payments, check deposits, etc.). However, essential personnel must be restricted to the absolute minimum number of people necessary and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) social distancing guidelines must be observed.</li></ol>

## RED PHASE

3. Libraries may work in cooperation with local emergency management officials to provide essential services such as food distribution, blood donations, etc. In this instance, the library may remain open with essential personnel to provide these services but not for any other purpose than those listed in number two above.
4. Telework for staff.
5. Provide digital library materials, online programming, online reference services.
6. Make Wi-Fi services available outside the library.
7. Facilitate community meetings through the library's virtual meeting technology.
8. Engage with the community on social media.
9. Order [supplies](#). Consider coordinating with nearby libraries, systems, or districts:
  - 9.1. Masks.
  - 9.2. Cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
  - 9.3. Hand sanitizer.
  - 9.4. Tissues.
  - 9.5. Gloves.
  - 9.6. Thermometers.
  - 9.7. For more information about supplies, refer to:
    - 9.7.1. [Guidance for Businesses Permitted to Operate during the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency to Ensure the Safety and Health of Employees and the Public.](#)
    - 9.7.2. [Order of the Governor and Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures \(to keep employees and customers safe\).](#)
    - 9.7.3. [Order of the Governor and Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures.](#)
    - 9.7.4. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes.](#)

## Yellow Phase

As regions or counties move into the yellow phase, some restrictions on work and social interaction will ease while others, such as closures of schools, gyms, and other indoor recreation centers, as well as limitations around large gatherings, remain in place.

The purpose of this phase is to begin to reopen Pennsylvania while keeping a close eye on the public health data to ensure the spread of disease remains contained to the greatest extent possible.

## What Does It Mean When My County or Region Changes from Red to Yellow?

When the Governor announces that a county or region is changing from red to yellow, libraries in yellow areas will be permitted to reopen with limited services, provided they adhere to the DOH and CDC guidelines and the matrix below.

The yellow phase is broken into three stages for libraries:

1. **Stage 1:** Preparing the staff, collections, and facility for return to service.
2. **Stage 2:** Limited public services restored.
3. **Stage 3:** Library building opens for in-person service with precautionary measures in place.

Library boards in consultation with their library director will determine locally when to advance from stage 1 to stage 2 of the yellow phase, and then to stage 3 of the yellow phase as staffing levels and supplies allow.

During the first stage when staff reenter library facilities, libraries must implement all state and federal guidelines that apply to community organizations and businesses. These include:

1. [Guidance for Businesses Permitted to Operate during the COVID-19 Disaster; Emergency to Ensure the Safety and Health of Employees and the Public;](#)
2. [Order of the Governor and Secretary of Health providing for business safety measures \(to keep employees and customers safe\);](#)
3. [Order of the Governor and Secretary of Health providing for building safety measures;](#)
4. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes;](#)
5. [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Green Phase of reopening](#)
6. [Summer Recreation, Camps, and Pools Frequently Asked Questions](#) (PDF)
7. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\). Considerations for Youth and Summer Camps](#)
8. [CDC COVID-19 Employer information for Office Buildings;](#)
9. [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers;](#)
10. [CDC Interim Guidance for Community and Faith-Based Organizations;](#) and
11. [PDE Office of Commonwealth Libraries Framework for Reopening Public Libraries \(Revised June 5, 2020\).](#)

In addition, libraries may find it helpful to review guidance in the [Caring for Our Children](#) national standards database on the selection of appropriate [sanitizers or disinfectants](#) for child care settings provided by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education.

Finally, libraries must also observe best practices for quarantining and disinfecting library materials. For more information, consult Appendix A: Safe Handling of Physical Materials.

# YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

## WORK & CONGREGATE SETTING RESTRICTIONS

### STAGE 1: PREPARING THE STAFF, COLLECTIONS, AND FACILITY FOR RETURN TO SERVICE.

Library boards in consultation with their library director will determine locally when to advance to each stage within the yellow phase (as staffing levels and supplies will allow). Additional guidance may be issued by the commonwealth as conditions warrant.

#### Stage 1: Staff

1. Verify adequate [supplies](#) are available. Consider coordinating with nearby libraries, systems, or districts:
  - 1.1. Masks.
  - 1.2. Cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
  - 1.3. Hand sanitizer.
  - 1.4. Tissues.
  - 1.5. Gloves.
  - 1.6. Thermometers.
2. Staff returns to building. Those who can telework must do so wherever feasible. Consider:
  - 2.1. Identifying staff who are able to return to work.
  - 2.2. Identifying staff duties and roles to develop a return to work plan.
  - 2.3. Developing a staff schedule with staggered shifts to limit contact with others.
  - 2.4. For libraries with branches or bookmobiles, determine which facilities can be staffed first (if necessary).
  - 2.5. Whether or not to use volunteers as many are in high-risk groups.
  - 2.6. Extra staff time needed to handle new duties and time needed for:
    - 2.6.1. Hand washing breaks at least once an hour as per [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#).
    - 2.6.2. Regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces as per [PA Building Safety Measure Order](#).
    - 2.6.3. Receiving and safe handling of returned items.
    - 2.6.4. Retrieving and preparing items for pick-up.
    - 2.6.5. Assisting patrons with new service limitations and requirements.
    - 2.6.6. Monitoring vendor access to building.
    - 2.6.7. Monitoring or limiting public access to building.

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 2.7. Determine how to handle staff illness or the possibility of staff illness. Consider:
  - 2.7.1. Adjusting leave policies to encourage staff to stay home when sick. (Refer to [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) non-profit employer requirements).
  - 2.7.2. Asking staff daily health screening questions and conducting temperature checks.
  - 2.7.3. Monitoring staff absenteeism.
  - 2.7.4. Limiting in-person meetings that require close contact.
  - 2.7.5. Designating an area where staff who become ill while at work can quarantine until they are able to leave.
  - 2.7.6. Participating in contact tracing if an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19.
3. Train/orient staff in new procedures:
  - 3.1. Emphasize that staff should stay home when ill or if exposed to someone who is ill.
  - 3.2. Identify and explain who staff should ask for clarification or additional information.
  - 3.3. Determine and discuss health guidelines to be followed such as:
    - 3.3.1. Enforcement of social distancing.
    - 3.3.2. Proper handwashing.
    - 3.3.3. [Universal masking and the handling of masks](#). Masks not required for individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years). Documentation of such medical condition is not required.
    - 3.3.4. Gloves.
    - 3.3.5. Limit number of people in the building by maintaining social distance of six feet. However, as per [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#) building occupancy must not exceed greater than 50 percent of the number stated on the library's certificate of occupancy.
    - 3.3.6. Prohibit gatherings larger than 25 people at meetings, programs, events, etc. as per the [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#).
    - 3.3.7. Cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
    - 3.3.8. Safe handling of library materials.
    - 3.3.9. Changes in circulation or other procedures to guard staff and patron health.

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 3.4. Consider special training for interacting with colleagues and the public in a crisis- or trauma-based situation.
4. Clarify job duties for altered services/shortened hours.

### Stage 1: Facility

5. Monitor supply stock availability for: masks, gloves, cleaning, disinfecting supplies, etc.
6. Clean high-touch surfaces and set-up schedule for routine cleaning.
7. Provide employees and library patrons with what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes such as tissues and lined, no-touch trash cans.
8. Require custodial staff to wear gloves when disposing of trash and washing their hands immediately thereafter.
9. Set-up the service desks and other staff/public areas in the library to encourage social distancing as outlined in the [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#):
  - 9.1. Install sneeze shields of non-porous materials such as plexiglass, plastic, glass, etc.
  - 9.2. Determine where staff will take breaks and eat lunches. Reconfigure furniture and workstations as needed.
  - 9.3. Determine where returned items are quarantined.
  - 9.4. Reconfigure furniture, equipment, etc. to limit group interaction and enforce social distancing guidelines (in preparation for stage 3 of the yellow phase).
  - 9.5. Establish traffic patterns (in preparation for stage 3 of the yellow phase).
  - 9.6. Patron spacing such as tape on floor (in preparation for stage 3 of the yellow phase).
10. Contact delivery services and vendors regarding reopening plans.
11. Remove public use toys, board games, and other shared items (in preparation for stage 3 of the yellow phase).
12. Determine what will be the facility entry point and how to limit traffic into facility (in preparation for stage 3 of the yellow phase).

### Stage 1: General Operations

13. Update human resources, library services, and patron behavior policies as needed.
14. To prepare for possible future closures, update policies and procedures as needed.
15. Establish and implement a plan in case the library is exposed to a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, according to the [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#), to prepare for stages 2 and 3 of the yellow phase.

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

### Stage 1: Services

16. Determine how patrons will return library materials:
  - 16.1. Return bins.
  - 16.2. Returns made by patrons handing items directly to staff ("[Why You Shouldn't do Curbside During COVID-19](#)" Library Journal, April 22, 2020).
17. Determine how you are handling disinfection and quarantine periods for materials that have been returned or handled by patrons (See Appendix 1: Safe Handling of Physical Materials).
18. Determine how you are handling:
  - 18.1. Loan limits, periods, and due dates.
  - 18.2. Fines and fees.
  - 18.3. Hold requests, hold limits, and hold request periods.
  - 18.4. Sanitation and cleaning requirements.
  - 18.5. Building security.
  - 18.6. Payments by cash, credit card or online transactions.
19. Update website with service information, integrated library system settings, interlibrary loan, and other software or technology, as needed.
20. Determine what online services and programming (such as exterior Wi-Fi access) will continue.
21. Begin planning for public services:
  - 21.1. Determine how patrons obtain library materials in stages 2 and 3 of the yellow phase:
    - 21.1.1. Stage 2: Mail.
    - 21.1.2. Stage 2: Pick-up service via curbside, lobby area, or bookmobile (See example: [Hennepin County Library procedures for contactless curbside pick-up service](#)).
    - 21.1.3. Stage 3: Patrons visit library.
    - 21.1.4. Stage 3: Patrons visit bookmobile (as long as social distancing can be maintained).
  - 21.2. Determine operating hours. Consider:
    - 21.2.1. Extra time staff needed due to social distancing limitations and/or cleaning requirements.
    - 21.2.2. Restarting service may result in unusually high returns, phone calls, questions from staff and public.
    - 21.2.3. Designating special hours for high-risk patrons as outlined in the [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#).

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 21.3. Determine how to handle the following:
  - 21.3.1. Masks for the public. Masks not required for individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years). Documentation of such medical condition is not required.
  - 21.3.2. Returns at public service desks.
  - 21.3.3. Hand cleaning supplies for patrons.
  - 21.3.4. Patron food services (vending machines, cafes, etc.).
  - 21.3.5. Multiple building entrances.
  - 21.3.6. Number of people entering and exiting the building.
  - 21.3.7. Donated library materials.
- 21.4. Plan for future limited, low-contact programming and outreach during stage 3 in the yellow phase.
  - 21.4.1. Develop a written health and safety plan for youth service programs that uses applicable recommendations from the [CDC Consideration for Youth and Summer Camps](#).
  - 21.4.2. Limit the mixing of children, perhaps through staggered arrival or pick-up times and activities. Consider keeping groups of children in separate rooms or spaces. If possible, include the same group members and staff providers during scheduled youth service programs.
  - 21.4.3. Limit direct contact between caregivers and staff members during drop-off or pick-up times for youth service programs, being sure to adhere to social distancing recommendations of six feet.

### Stage 1: Communications

- 22. Post reopening dates and service adaptations to social media and website. Issue news release.
- 23. Post the library's health and safety plan for youth service programs on the library's publicly available website prior to providing in-person services to children.
- 24. Prepare and post employee/patron [signage](#). (Place signage throughout each site to mandate social distancing for both patrons and employees). All libraries must print, sign, and post the commonwealth's 'COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Businesses' flyer on their premises both in employee common space and near the public entrance.
  - 24.1. [COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Business flyer – English 8.5X11-inch](#) (PDF).
  - 24.2. [COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Business flyer – English 8.5X14-inch](#) (PDF).
  - 24.3. [COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Business flyer – Spanish 8.5X11-inch](#) (PDF).

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 24.4. [COVID-19 Safety Procedures for Business flyer – Spanish 8.5X14-inch](#) (PDF).
25. Resume vendor and delivery services.

### **STAGE 2: LIMITED PUBLIC SERVICES RESTORED.**

**Library boards in consultation with their library director will determine when to advance to stage 2 of the yellow phase (as staffing levels and supplies allow). Additional guidance may be issued by the commonwealth as conditions warrant.**

1. Verify adequate [supplies](#) are available. Consider coordinating with nearby libraries, systems, or districts.
2. Begin to offer limited public services:
  - 2.1. Provide pick-up service such as curbside or lobby area.
  - 2.2. Provide mail or other third-party delivery of library materials.
  - 2.3. Accept returns of materials.
  - 2.4. Provide information and reference services via telephone, email, and chat.
3. Maintain required health guidelines such as:
  - 3.1. Enforcement of social distancing (6 ft.).
  - 3.2. Proper handwashing.
  - 3.3. [Universal masking and the handling of masks](#). Masks not required for individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition (including children under the age of 2 years). Documentation of such medical condition is not required.
  - 3.4. Prohibit gatherings larger than 25 people at meetings, programs, events, etc. Gatherings of 25 or less must follow social distancing guidelines.
  - 3.5. Cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
  - 3.6. Safe handling of library materials.
  - 3.7. Changes in circulation or other procedures to guard staff and patron health.
  - 3.8. Gloves (as needed).
4. Continue and increase online programming.
5. Increase publicity to reengage and inform community about library's plans and upcoming programming.

## YELLOW PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

### STAGE 3: LIBRARY BUILDING OPENS FOR IN-PERSON SERVICE WITH PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES IN PLACE.

Library boards in consultation with their library director will determine when to advance to stage 3 of the yellow phase (as staffing levels and supplies allow). Additional guidance may be issued by the commonwealth as conditions warrant.

1. Allow patrons inside facility for limited in-person services:
  - 1.1. Maintain social distancing of six feet. However, building occupancy must not exceed greater than 50 percent of the number stated on the library's certificate of occupancy as per [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#).
  - 1.2. Prohibit gatherings larger than 25 people at meetings, programs, events, etc. Gatherings of 25 or less must follow social distancing guidelines as per commonwealth's [commonwealth's guidance for businesses](#).
2. Post signage throughout the library to mandate social distancing for both customers and employees.

### Green Phase

As designated by the Governor, the green phase eases most restrictions by lifting the stay-at-home and library closure orders to allow the commonwealth to strategically reopen while continuing to prioritize public health.

While this phase will facilitate a return to a "new normal," it will be equally important to continue to monitor public health indicators and adjust orders and restrictions as necessary to ensure the spread of disease remains at a minimum.

## GREEN PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

### WORK & CONGREGATE SETTING RESTRICTIONS

When a county moves from the yellow phase to green (as designated by the commonwealth), library boards in consultation with their library director will determine when to advance to the green phase (as staffing levels and supplies allow). Additional guidance may be issued by the commonwealth as conditions warrant.

1. Continued telework strongly encouraged.
2. Follow DOH's [business safety measures](#) and [building safety measures](#).

## GREEN PHASE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

3. Enforce all requirements for [in-person services during the yellow phase](#), except:
  - 3.1. Provide in-person services at 75% occupancy. Enforce social distancing requirements (which may limit occupancy below the 75% maximum capacity).
  - 3.2. Prohibit gatherings for planned or spontaneous events of greater than 250 individuals, such as concerts, fairs, festivals, conferences, sporting events, movie showings, theater performances, etc.
4. Must follow CDC and DOH Guidelines as they are amended.

Additional guidance may be issued by the commonwealth as conditions warrant.

## Appendix A: Safe Handling of Physical Library Materials<sup>1</sup>

Quarantine of library materials is the most effective known method of disinfection.<sup>2</sup>

Suggested quarantine periods for paper-based materials (such as books) range from 24<sup>3</sup>-120<sup>4</sup> hours (1 to 5 days). Suggested quarantine periods for non-paper-based library materials (such as plastic-covered books, CDs, DVDs, etc.) range from 72<sup>5</sup>-216<sup>6</sup> hours (3 to 9 days).

The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services' website [Handling Library Materials and Collections During a Pandemic](#) has COVID-19 information and resources on handling library collections.

It will be up to the individual library to decide the duration of quarantine for each material type.

It is recommended that libraries set up an area of the building as a materials isolation zone for those items that may have recently been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. This area could be a cleared range of shelving, a series of multiple book carts, or even piles of books on a table. Materials should be labeled with dates of when those items entered quarantine and when they are safe to be reshelved. Courier totes and bins should also be quarantined.

Currently, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, OCLC, and Battelle are collaborating to create and distribute science-based information and recommended practices designed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to museum, library, or archival services' staff and visitors. The project's website, [REopening Archives, Libraries and Museums \(REALM\)](#), provides project updates, a research timeline, webinars, and resources. [Project updates](#) are available by email.

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<sup>1</sup> The Appendix is adapted from *Recommendations for Library Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. (Regents Public Library Advisory Council. April 2020): <https://georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Recommendations-for-Library-Services-During-The-Covid-19-Pandemic.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Kampf, G., Todt, D., Pfaender, S., Steinmann, E., "Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents." *The Journal of Hospital Infection*. February 6, 2020.:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhin.2020.01.022>

While *The Journal of Hospital Infection* article also tests the effects of various disinfectants on the novel coronavirus, these chemicals are not safe to use on library and historic materials. There is no evidence or studies to suggest that expensive "book sterilization" or "book disinfection" equipment is effective or will not cause unnecessary damage to collections. Even methods for UV sterilization have not been standardized.

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Museum and Library Services. *Mitigating COVID-19 When Managing Paper-Based, Circulating, and Other Types of Collections*. March 30, 2020. <https://www.ims.gov/webinars/mitigating-covid-19-when-managing-paper-based-circulating-and-other-types-collections>

<sup>4</sup> Striegel, M., "COVID-19 Basics: Disinfecting Cultural Resources." National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, National Parks Service. March 25, 2020. <https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/covid-19-basics-disinfecting-cultural-resources/>

<sup>5</sup> Northeast Document Conservation Center, "Disinfecting Books and Other Collections." March 26, 2020. <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/3.-emergency-management/3.5-disinfecting-books>

<sup>6</sup> Kampf, G., Todt, D., Pfaender, S., Steinmann, E., "Persistence of coronaviruses."