
Pandemic Policy

(Continuity of Operation Policy)

Summary

To establish the protocol to be used in the event of a pandemic, as defined by local, state, federal, or world health organizations. If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, the library may be required to operate on limited staffing or take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness, including service restrictions, limited hours of operation, or possible closure by order of local public health officials. Recovery from a pandemic may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or other physical crises. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the library can be maintained for several weeks or more with limited staff and reduced hours due to a pandemic.

Definitions

Pandemic Plan

A pandemic plan differs from a general emergency preparedness policy or procedure. With an emergency preparedness policy, there is an assumption that staff will return to the building or begin rebuilding, almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire or storm, or if there is a utility shortage). If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for an extended period of time.

Pandemic

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. (World Health Organization <https://www.who.int>)

Appropriate Staffing Level

For the purposes of this policy, Appropriate Staffing Level refers to the minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service safely and efficiently, as determined by the Library Director or his/her designee.

Policy

1. Library Closure

Public Health Mandate

The Nesmith Library will close due to pandemic in the event of a mandate order or recommendation for closure issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level.

Discretionary Service Level Changes

At the discretion of the Library Director, the Library may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily in the event that there is not sufficient staff to maintain appropriate staffing levels or if unable to maintain adequate social distancing for health and safety.

In the event of closure or reduction in operating hours, the Library Director or designee will maintain communication with staff, Library Board of Trustees, and the Town Administrator.

2. School Closure Due to Pandemic

In the event that the Windham School District is closed due to pandemic illness, the Nesmith Library will remain open, but with reduced hours and services, unless one of the aforementioned requirements for closing is also met. All library programs, special events, and meeting room reservations will be canceled. Hours will be reduced and services will be restricted on any day in which Windham schools are closed due to pandemic-related illness.

3. Staffing

Minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time is defined as three healthy employees available to be present at the library during all open hours with a maximum 8 hour workday and 40 hour workweek per full-time employee, and no more than 29 hour workweek per part-time employee. An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level or a necessity to maintain this temporary minimal level for more than two consecutive days will result in reduced hours or closing the library.

In providing service safely and efficiently, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the Library Director or designee.

- Increased health/safety measures for staff (e.g., wearing of gloves and/or face masks, wiping down work areas, etc.);
- Restricted access to areas in the library (e.g., closing study rooms or unmonitored areas for safety);
- Social distancing practices in public areas;
- Reduction of open hours;
- Cancellation of all programs, special events, and meeting room reservations;
- Reallocation of employee responsibilities and shift/schedule changes to provide coverage during open hours;
- Closure of the library.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the established Personnel policy. In the event of closure, employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

If the Library is closed or hours reduced, healthy employees may be assigned work-at-home tasks to be completed in their compensated hours. When appropriate, work tools (e.g., laptops, supplies, etc.) will be checked out to employees by the Library Director or designee for work-at-home assignments.

4. Public

If the library is open to the public, the library may require the use of face coverings by the public, over the age of 4, that covers both mouth and nose, appropriate social distancing, restrict areas of the library, and restrict the occupancy levels of the building in accordance with local health official or emergency management recommendations, for the duration of the pandemic or public health emergency. Accommodations may be made, as needed, per ADA requirements.

5. Communication

In the event of closure necessitated by pandemic, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours must be announced in a timely manner. Library staff should follow the normal procedure used for any unexpected closure/program cancellation, which includes posting on wmur.com, Facebook, and the library website.

6. Prioritization of Services

Priority will be given to the following essential services:

- Information services for the public, both in-person and online;
- Payroll;
- Accounts Payable;
- Facility Maintenance.

In the case of reduced staffing or reduced hours of operation, the Library Director or designee will prioritize service-related tasks and assign the daily work plan to staff.

ADA compliant edits were performed on September 11, 2026.

Adopted on this 16 day of March, 2020 by the Nesmith Library Board of Trustees

Amendments approved by Nesmith Library Board of Trustees August 18, 2020

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