

Seneca Falls Library Pandemic Policy

Purpose:

To establish the protocol to be used in the event of a pandemic. If there is a pandemic, 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 or modification to digital services, limited hours of operation or curbside operations, or possible closure by order of local, state and/or federal 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.

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). Recovery from a pandemic may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for an extended period of time.

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

Procedure:

Library Closure:

The Seneca Falls Library may need to close the building for services to the public under the following scenarios:

Public Health Mandate:

The Seneca Falls Library will close to the public 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 and the Library Board President the Library may close, reduce its operating hours, limit public service to digital, technology mediated, 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.

School Closure Due to Pandemic:

In the event that the Seneca Falls School District is closed due to pandemic illness, the Seneca Falls Library will close to the public. All library programs, special events, and meeting room reservations will be canceled.

Staff Availability:

Levels of adequate circulation staff during all open hours is subject to the amount of hours the Seneca Falls Library is open. An inability to maintain this temporary adequate staffing 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.

- Increased health/safety measures for staff (e.g., wearing of gloves, wiping down work areas, etc.)
- Restricted access to areas in the library (e.g., closing rooms or unmonitored areas for safety);
- Social distancing practices (6' separation between individuals) in public and staff 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 or closed hours, with timely and appropriate communication;
- 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. If an employee receives medical direction to isolate and is confined to home, they will notify the Library Director and will be excused from reporting to work without cost to their Sick Leave. If they are able to work remotely, they can continue to perform job duties as assigned by the Library Director.

Communication:

In the event of closure or reduction in operating hours, the Library Director will maintain communication with staff and Library Board of Trustees. 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 social media channels, email newsletters and the library website.

Prioritization of Services:

Priority will be given to the following essential services:

- Information services to the public
- Payroll

- Accounts Payable
- Facility Maintenance

In the case of reduced staffing or reduced hours of operation, the Library Director will prioritize service-related tasks and assign the daily work plan to staff. If the library building can remain open for non-public service, staff who are healthy should report to work on a schedule identified by the Library. Under these circumstances, evening and weekend hours would not be maintained. Staff whose job duties include tasks that can be done remotely may be assigned tasks and projects to assist the library with offering digital services and support to the public. This work may include working on future program planning, remote training via webinars, providing email reference services to the public, posting information updates and providing digital resources for supporting the social fabric of the community during this time of increased anxiety and stress.

Return to Normal Operations and Services:

When advised by local, state and/or federal health authorities that the pandemic is no longer a threat to the community, the Seneca Falls Library Director will inform the Board of Trustees and they will convene to confer and vote on resuming normal operations and services.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on May 18, 2021

Re-Approved by the Board of Trustees on May 18, 2026