Texas State Library and Archives Commission
Reopening Libraries: Resource Guide

State Action

On April 27, 2020, Governor Abbott issued Executive Order GA-18, which initiates a phased, statewide plan for reopening businesses and public services in Texas beginning on May 1, 2020. The order states in part:

> 2.e. Museums and libraries that operate at up to 25 percent of the total listed occupancy; provided, however, that (a) local public museums and local public libraries may so operate only if permitted by the local government, and (b) any components of museums or libraries that have interactive functions or exhibits, including child play areas, must remain closed.

This order extends until May 15, 2020. The Governor stated in a press conference announcing the order that the hope was to open services further around May 18 if state officials see no health situations necessitating a slow down of reopening services. If the statewide health status continues to improve, according to current planning discussed by the Governor, businesses and services would then be able to open to 50% capacity, with increments being added in time intervals.

For local libraries, important components of the GA-18 Order include:

- the statement that libraries may only open if allowed to do so by their local governing authority,
- the threshold for occupancy is set at the "up to" 25 percent mark, and
- interactive functions or exhibits, including child play areas, must remain closed.

Libraries should work with their local jurisdiction to determine how this order may be implemented.
The full order may be accessed at: https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-executive-order-relating-to-the-expanded-reopening-of-services.

Overview for Libraries on Approaching Planning

Every library is different. Physical spaces, staffing levels, services, and local directives all shape what a library is able to offer its public. Consequently, there is no one-size plan that can serve the broad spectrum of choices and requirements.

Each library must determine which combination of practices will work best for its own situation and address local priorities and directions. There are many resources to assist libraries with formulating a plan of action. We provide a few sample Reopening Plans in the second section of this document.

Additionally, there are some key areas that all libraries should address while creating their plans. Those broad areas are noted below with some questions and points to consider to help library managers navigate issues that may affect their planning.

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1. Sample Reopening Plans

1.1 Recommendations for Library Services During The Covid-19 Pandemic (Georgia Public Library Service)

https://georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Recommendations-for-Library-Services-During-The-Covid-19-Pandemic.pdf

1.2 New Mexico State Library

https://library.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Staged-Reopening-Plan.pdf

1.3 Colorado Library Consortium: Returning to Service - Libraries and COVID-19

https://www.clicweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Libraries-Returning-to-Service-and-COVID-19.pdf

1.4 Utah State Library: Utah Libraries Plan for Moving Towards Full Service

https://library.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Utah-Libraries-Plan-for-Moving-Towards-Full-Service.pdf

1.5 Reopening: Not "When?" But "How?" Libraries consider the realities of a post-pandemic world, American Libraries (American Library Association). By Cass Balzer, April 17, 2020

https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/covid-19-reopening-libraries-not-when-but-how/

1.6 Texas Plan, which includes checklists for libraries and museums (pages 35 – 36)

https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Report.pdf

1.7 Alabama Public Library Service

https://apls.libguides.com/c.php?g=1032129&p=7481010&preview=3d541ab627af6aed8c4fe5435774a5a2

2. Questions and Issues to Consider with your Governing Authority

As you may have noticed from the sample re-opening plans above, many libraries have developed a phased or staged approach to reopening. Use the following questions and prompts as guides to craft an approach that works for your library environment and allows you, your staff, and your governing authority to adapt the plan as the situation changes in your community. We strongly encourage you to work with your governing authority to ensure your plans align.

2.1 Determine the Level of Reopening

- *What is your governing authority requiring and expecting?*
  The Governor's April 27 Executive Order allows local jurisdictions to determine if local libraries should be reopened for business. The order further directs that some interactive areas may be closed. Working in consultation with local governing authorities, library managers should review the order to develop a plan.
- Determine the amount of latitude you have to customize your level of opening.
  - Can telecommuting options be offered to employees who can work at home?
- Review your hours:
  - Can library hours be changed or limited?
  - Do staff need time before you open and after you close to clean and disinfect?
  - Could the library be open at special hours for at-risk populations?
- Consider your staff's health (physical, emotional, and mental) and availability:
  - Is your workforce healthy? Are you experiencing a shortage of workers due to illness or quarantine?
  - What other issues are impacting your staffing level? Are staff caring for children or other family members?
- Consider social distancing guidelines, restrict library capacity:
  - How many employees can be in the library at once while maintaining physical separation (social distancing)?
  - How many patrons can your facilities maintain with the same social distancing measures kept in mind?

2.2 Physical Environment

- Consider how many people can be accommodated in both public and staff areas while maintaining social distancing (i.e., six feet distances).
  - Determine how to reorganize your physical space, such as removing desks or chairs in sitting areas to allow greater spacing.
  - Block off tight or hard to monitor spaces with stanchions or tape
- Mark off six feet spaces in front of service areas to keep people lined up at appropriate distances.
- Consider ways to keep separate staff and members of the public when they are talking.
  - Can plastic barriers or plexiglass be installed over service desks?
  - Can hands free sanitizer stations be installed? If not, can you ensure an adequate supply of hand cleaners for the public and staff?

- o Have fines been waived, and if not, what procedures will staff follow when they handle money?

2.3 Staffing (Policies and Practices)

- What health guidelines need to be provided to staff?
  - o Staff need direction on what to do if they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, if they believe they have been exposed, and other situations. The CDC provides guidelines. Develop information for library employees in alignment with national, state, and local directives. Your local governing authority likely has a model policy for other departments.
- What instructions do you need to provide to staff regarding your local time and leave policies? How do they apply during this phase of operations?
  - o Consider what flexibility your staff may need.
- Do you have staff that are a part of a vulnerable population (i.e. 65 and older, compromised immune systems)? Can they continue to work remotely?
- Can staff rotate shifts in the physical library, continuing to do some work at home?
- What mental health resources are available to staff as they return to work?
- What training will need to be provided to staff on new procedures?
- Do shifts for breakrooms and other staff areas need to be implemented to maintain social distance and keep areas clean?
- Who will provide daily cleaning?

2.4 Service Accommodations

Consider what services can be provided remotely. These might include storytimes, reference consultations, book talks, etc.

- Will there be a limit to how long patrons can stay in the library to allow for new patrons to enter?
- How will patrons enter the library? Will an employee be stationed at the door to monitor how many patrons and staff are in the library?
- Will browsing of the stacks be allowed, or will you put materials on hold and allow patrons to check out their holds?
- Will communal public access computers or catalogs continue to be used?
- Consider limiting the number of people using communal spaces, such as bathrooms.
- Will meeting rooms or study rooms be closed to the public?
- Will toys, puzzles, and other items that encourage interaction be removed from the children's area?

2.5 Disinfecting and Cleaning

- Devise protocols for how often the following will be cleaned: surfaces, common areas, staff areas, and materials.
  - o Will patrons be asked to clean up their physical space once they are ready to leave (as they do in gyms)?

- o Will wipes be provided?
- o Will staff clean physical spaces between patrons?
- How will you deal with stacks and circulating materials? How will returned items be quarantined? If so, for how long? Where will you place them? What system will be used to keep track of them?
  - o Find an area in your library to quarantine items for the recommended period of time. Devise a system (e.g., colored paper, slips with return dates) to monitor returned items and prepare for circulation.
  - o Consider how to manage your book drops and communicate the quarantine protocols to patrons.

2.6 Protective Equipment

- Consider what kinds of equipment your staff need before re-opening as well as regular operations. Will staff be required to wear protective equipment?
  - o Masks (The CDC states that cloth and homemade masks are acceptable for use in the case of non-medical settings and similar).
  - o Hand sanitizer
  - o Plastic shielding
- Where can you get a supply of materials?
  - o Check with your governing authority.
  - o Ask for donations from local businesses and the public.
- What will you provide for the public if anything?

2.7 Directions and Signage

- Will markings be placed on the floor to indicate how far apart people can stand to maintain proper social distancing?
- Will signs be placed out front to remind patrons of the building capacity and social distancing requirements?
- Will signs be placed out front and throughout the library to remind patrons to self-monitor symptoms?
- Will signs be placed to section off areas?
- How many signs are needed throughout the building to remind people to wash their hands?
- How will the library request the public to wear face coverings (if that is your policy)?

2.8 Communications

Consider a communications plan of your re-opening plan and strategies. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission has devised a Communications Toolkit for libraries: https://www.tsl.texas.gov/sites/default/files/public/tslac/ld/workshops/webinars/COVID/TSLAC_COVID _Communications_for_Libraries_Resource.pdf

3. Materials and Resource List

3.1 COVID-19 Information and Resources for Library Workers (TSLAC)
https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ldn/covid-19

3.2 The Governor's Report to Reopen Texas (April 27, 2020)
https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Report.pdf

3.3 EPA list of disinfectant resources
https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

3.4 Texas Department of State Health Services
General Resources: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/
Communication tools on COVID prevention: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/tools.aspx

4. General Resources for Reopening Businesses

4.1. CDC general plan for business

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

This resource offers detailed information on preparing a workplace for COVID-19 response including facilities and staffing. It links to many resources for cleaning and preparing spaces. This resource provides the definitive standard for cleaning and best practices.

4.2 OSHA – Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf

This resource contains a helpful breakdown of risk levels for employees and offers protective standards for the varying levels of risk.

4.3 General OSHA Information: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/

The OSHA website offers many resources for employers and employees. Publications are also available in Spanish.

4.4 Handling Library Materials and Collections During a Pandemic

http://www.ala.org/alcts/preservationweek/resources/pandemic (ALCTS)

4.5 COVID-19 Basics: Disinfecting Cultural Resources (National Center for Preservation Technology and Training)

https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/covid-19-basics-disinfecting-cultural-resources/

4.6 IMLS and CDC Offer Guidance for Disinfecting Returned Library Books (School Library Journal)
https://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/?detailStory=IMLS-CDC-offer-guidance-for-disinfecting-returned-books-library-journal-coronavirus-covid19