



**SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS FOR  
LIBRARIES TO ADDRESS COVID-19  
Updated as of December 11, 2020**

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**Purpose**

**These workplace safety standards for Libraries, are posted in advance of their effective date to allow Libraries time to prepare to operate in compliance with these mandatory health and safety standards. Libraries remain subject to the previously-issued, October 1, 2020 safety standards until these revised workplace safety standards go into effect on December 13, 2020.**

These standards are minimum requirements only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data and matrix upon which these guidelines are based can and does change frequently, and the owner or operator for each library is accountable for staying abreast of any updates to these requirements.

Violation of these standards may result in civil fines of up to \$500 per violation; provided that each individual instance of non-compliance and each day of a continuing violation may be fined as a separate violation. Each person present over any capacity limit specified below may likewise be fined as a separate violation.

In accordance with [COVID – 19 Order no. 58](#) Returning all Municipalities to Phase 3, Step 1 COVID -19 Safety Rules, activities and capacity allowances previously authorized as part of Step 2 of Phase 3 are withdrawn.

**Safety Standards for Libraries in Massachusetts:**

No activity in Libraries can occur without meeting these sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Libraries. These standards apply to all Libraries until rescinded or amended by the State.

The following workplace specific guidance is organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations, and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

**I. Social Distancing and Capacity Limits**

- Require face coverings for all workers and patrons, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability
- Each library must monitor patron entries and exits and limit occupancy at all times to the greater of the following:
  - 40% of the building’s maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder
  - Buildings for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 8

- persons (including staff) per 1,000 square feet of accessible space
  - In any case, no enclosed space within the building shall exceed occupancy of 8 persons per 1,000 square feet
- All occupancy counts and calculations shall include patrons, staff, and other workers
- Ensure separation of 6 feet or more between individuals where possible:
  - Close or reconfigure common spaces and high density areas where workers and patrons are likely to congregate (e.g., lobbies and workstations for patrons) to allow social distancing. Employers are encouraged to close break rooms or limit their use
  - Physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out (partitions must be at least 6 feet in height)
  - Install physical barriers for checkout stations where possible; otherwise maintain 6 feet distance by closing adjacent checkout stations as needed to establish 6 feet of separation
  - Install visual social distancing markers to encourage patrons to remain 6 feet apart (e.g., lines outside of the libraries if applicable, checkout lines, lines to use the restroom)
  - Mark rooms and hallways to indicate 6 feet separation
- Stagger lunch and break times, regulating max number of people in one place and ensuring at least 6 feet of physical distancing
- Establish directional pathways to manage visitor flow for foot traffic, to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to rooms, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- Arrange all public computers and technology so work stations are spaced out at least 6 feet apart
- If spacing or physical partitioning is not possible, equipment should be blocked off (e.g., every other or every third computer) to maintain 6 feet distancing
- Contactless payment methods are encouraged
- Offer self-checkout where possible

## **II. Hygiene Protocols**

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, wherever possible and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- Supply workers at workplace location with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers of hygiene and safety protocols
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol should be made available at entrances and throughout floor areas for both workers and patrons
- Avoid sharing equipment and supplies between workers
- All public computers and other shared technology and equipment accessible to multiple users must be wiped down and disinfected between uses. Provide disinfectant wipes at each work station for patrons to wipe down equipment after use
- Books and other materials should be placed in marked containers after patron handling or return and subject to 24-hour quarantine before being returned to shelves by library workers

## **III. Staffing and Operations**

- Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
  - Social distancing, hand-washing, proper use of face coverings
  - Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
  - Reinforce that staff shall not coming to work if ill
  - When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
  - Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- Facilities must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following:
  - Worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
  - Worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
  - Worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
  - Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home
- Adjust workplace hours and shifts (leverage working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival / departure) to minimize contact across workers and reduce congestion at entry points
- Maintain a log of workers and patrons to support contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information) if needed
- Libraries are encouraged to offer exclusive hours or other accommodations for those in high-risk populations as defined by the CDC
- Workers who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- Workers are strongly encouraged to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer
- Workers shall not appear for work or complete a shift if feeling ill
- Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19, to disclose to library managers for purposes of cleaning, disinfecting, and contact tracing. If library management is notified of any positive case at the workplace, management must immediately notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located. Library management must assist the LBOH with contact tracing efforts, including advising likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH
- Post notice to workers and patrons of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth’s [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace](#)
- Libraries should maintain operating hours that allow for on-going off-hour sanitation and cleaning
- Limit visitors and service providers on site; shipping and deliveries should be completed in designated areas
- Limit movement of workers to discrete work zones to minimize overlap where possible
- Consider waiving fines and extending due dates to discourage patrons from coming into the

library in-person

- Allow water fountains to be used as refill stations only, provided that social distancing can be maintained. Patrons and workers should bring their own water bottles
- Additional on-site amenities and services may only open and operate when those amenities or services would otherwise be authorized to operate under the Commonwealth's Phased Reopening Plan and then must adhere to all sector-specific safety protocols, available on the [Reopening Plan website](#), applicable to the amenity or service. Examples include:
  - Restaurants and cafes: Must follow the latest restaurant guidance
  - Book shops: Must follow the latest retail guidance

#### **IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with CDC guidelines
- Conduct frequent cleaning and disinfection of site (at least daily and more frequently if feasible)
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, bathrooms, baskets, carts, worker break rooms)
- In event of a positive case, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance
- Open windows and doors to increase airflow where possible
- Once returned or handled by patrons, remove books from service for 24 hours (before it can be returned by workers and checked out by another patron)

**Additional worker safety guidelines and resources (with hyperlinks to web pages) are available below:**

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)

[OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)

[OSHA Fact Sheet – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease \(Updated 3/21/20\)](#)

#### **Additional Information:**

Massachusetts State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website  
[mass.gov/covid19](https://mass.gov/covid19)

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>