

Pandemic Preparedness Plan

With the rapidly evolving news surrounding the transmission of the novel Coronavirus/COVID-19, the Middlesex Public Library wants to assure our patrons that we are taking the utmost care and concern in maintaining the safety and health of our staff and patrons. At this time, we intend to remain open and provide services to the people of Middlesex with as little disruption as possible, but please be advised that this status may change dependent upon state and municipal regulations and restrictions.

We've taken the following precautions, suggested and prompted in part by the American Library Association (ALA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Mayo Clinic, as well as discussion with our municipal leaders.

It's important to remember that cancelling programs and limiting certain services does not give in to panic. Removing opportunities for large groups of people in confined spaces results in a variety of indirect and direct ways of managing the spread of this virus - keeps the number of infected people lower, prevents medical systems from becoming overwhelmed, and buys time to allow the medical community to distribute and examine options.

What is a Pandemic? "A pandemic refers to a global epidemic — one that has spread over several countries or continents affecting a large number of people. Dr. Pritish Tosh adds, 'In epidemiologic terms, an outbreak refers to a number of cases that exceeds what would be expected. A pandemic is when there is an outbreak that affects most of the world'" (Mayo Clinic, 2020).



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS CANCELLED: AS OF MARCH 13, ALL LIBRARY SPONSORED CHILDRENS PROGRAMS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL MARCH 31. We will reassess prior to March 31 for the month of April. This includes weekly and special event programs, etc.

ADULT PROGRAMS CANCELLED: AS OF MARCH 18, ALL LIBRARY SPONSORED ADULT PROGRAMS ARE CANCELLED UNTIL MARCH 31. This includes movies, ESL, Citizenship classes, Wise Aging Classes, Computer Classes, Ukulele Group, etc. Anything listed on our website is considered a "Library Sponsored Program." We will reassess prior to March 31 for the month of April.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY PROGRAMS: The Friends of the Library March 22 program is CANCELLED. The FoL will make determinations on future programs after reassessing the situation at the end of March.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION: Our computers, doorknobs, counters, and other commonly visited/used spots will be wiped down with disinfection materials based on usage (i.e., busier areas will be wiped down hourly). Wipes will also be available to patrons at the Reference Desk so they can wipe their workstations down as desired.

MEETING ROOMS BOOKED AT OWN RISK: Currently, while our Library sponsored programs are cancelled, we are leaving the cancellation decision for any outside group that has booked a meeting room/Community Room to those individual outside groups. If your group has booked a meeting room, or desires to book a meeting room, please know that we are doing our best in disinfecting and cleaning the area. These rooms are not open to the public during our hours of operation, hence they will not be receiving the hourly disinfection treatment. You are at your own risk if you decide to continue to hold your event/meeting.

CHILDREN'S TOYS REMOVED: For the time being, our children's toys are in storage.

MAKERSPACE CLOSED: The Makerspace will remain closed.

HAND SANITIZER: We STRONGLY ENCOURAGE ALL VISITORS to the Library to use Library provided Hand Sanitizer upon entering AND leaving the Library. Limit touching your face to a minimum.

WASH YOUR HANDS: For at least 20 seconds in hot water, the BEST way to prevent the spread of germs, now and always, is to wash your hands with soap. If you need a reminder of what 20 seconds feels like, or proper handwashing technique, we've posted info sheets on our website and social media so you can enjoy some bathroom karaoke while preventing the spread of germs. Also, limit touching your face to a minimum.

FINE FREE FOR MARCH: If you are sick or have any cold-like symptoms, we ask that you do not come to the Library, even to return your materials. Because of the rapid spread and potential transmission of this virus, we are **suspending all fines for the month of March – as of today, materials will NOT accrue fines**. Please note that this will be reassessed on March 31, and the fine free period may cease after April 1, dependent upon the Library Board of Trustees' and Director's decisions and assessment of the pandemic at that time.

DIGITAL RESOURCES: We encourage users to utilize the many digital remote services available as much as possible. We provide electronic access to a variety of library materials, including: Books and Audiobooks (Hoopla, Libby by Overdrive), Magazines (RBDigital), Music (Hoopla), and Movies and TV Shows (Hoopla). You can also view a complete list of all electronic resources and instructions on our website.

CLOSING THE LIBRARY: At this time, we plan on staying open, provided municipal and state permissions and staffing abilities. If at any time we have to close, it will be posted on our voicemail message, social media channels, and websites. If we have to close, we have options in place to still provide communication and informational support to our patrons.



We encourage all of our patrons to rely on verified and legitimate sources of information for news. Please visit the following websites to keep up to date with all the news on Coronavirus/COVID-19. And, of course – WASH YOUR HANDS!

HELPFUL LINKS:

State of NJ, Department of Health: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

The World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Videos from the CDC on COVID-19: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvvp9iOILTQaJa78zFQ0QgvShQ2HEwHxP>

CDC Department of Preparedness Twitter Feed: <https://twitter.com/cdcemergency>

Fact Sheets for parents and children: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus.html>

National Public Radio (NPR) comic explaining Coronavirus for kids:

https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR1Of7q3hgvvwBylLfq_SHoxb5aNIGAPsXK-eFu3BwcPMHKJpNUVa5X4a8w

And also, it's important to engage in emotional health checks and balances during situations such as this. Check <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4894.pdf> for information on how to control anxiety and emotions during this time.