

May 1, 2020

Indiana Library Federation Appreciates Governor Holcomb's Recognition of Public Libraries in Plan

Earlier today, Governor Holcomb outlined his five-stage [Back On Track Indiana](#) plan to resume services in phases between now and July 4. In March, Indiana's 236 public libraries closed their public spaces in order to prevent community spread of the coronavirus.

Indiana Library Federation sincerely appreciates **how public libraries are specified in [Back On Track Indiana Plan Stage 2](#), and [Executive Order 20-26](#), which gives Indiana's public libraries the ability to phase in services according to local needs, staff capacity, and the community's situation.** Indiana's public libraries are governed by local library boards, who with the library director, develop plans for reopening in phases. Local officials may issue more restrictive guidance. For example, libraries in Marion, Lake, and Cass counties will follow a longer time horizon to reopen.

What does the Executive Order 20-26 mean for Indiana's public libraries?

E.O. 20-26 means that libraries may begin phasing in additional services to serve their communities. Indiana's libraries will continue to evolve their services, as they have throughout the pandemic. Libraries have been providing these important services:

- **Internet Access** - Over 350 library branches extended Wi-Fi to the parking lots. See <https://www.ilfonline.org/page/Wi-Fi-map>.
- **E-Resources** - Public libraries expanded electronic resources, including digital library cards to allow 24/7 access to quality sources of educational and recreational reading, videos, music, games, virtual storytimes and programs, and skill-building classes.
- **Ask-a-librarian** continues through the telephone and email.

As libraries phase in services, the *library experience* will be different for staff, residents, and community partners than in pre-COVID-19 times.

- **Staffing** - Indiana's library staff are its most valuable resource. Some staff will begin returning to library buildings, while other staff may continue teleworking. Library staff follow guidance from the CDC and new processes to maintain health and safety for all. Staff may work in shifts or teams to limit contacts. Staff may wear masks, and for some activities, gloves. *While we may look different, we are friendly and eager to serve.*
- **Hours** - Library hours may be limited due to staff availability and scheduling. The time at or in the library may be limited by the activity (pickup, appointment, document services). *Online resources will continue 24/7.*
- **Limited access to physical spaces** - For the foreseeable future, most libraries will continue to restrict access to most or all of the library facilities, including meeting spaces, seating areas, and computer labs. Libraries follow guidance about the number of people per square foot, continued social distancing, and elevated sanitation practices. *Staff and guest safety is a priority.*
- **Requests of guests/customers** - Libraries may designate specific restricted areas for parking, entry, walkways, and interactions with library staff. Libraries may require guests to wash hands, wear masks, and to follow other protocols. *We respectfully ask for your cooperation.*
- **Curbside and other services** - Libraries are in various stages of planning to offer curbside or grab-and-go pickup, document services, or appointments for individuals

needing assistance applying for unemployment and various eligibility programs. Curbside or grab-and-go service allows a card-holding patron to place a hold on materials for pickup during designated hours. Safe materials handling practices may limit the number of items or may delay the time required to process materials for pickup. *Check your local library website, or if you are already a cardholder, watch for an email or social media.*

The modern library is so much more than a building with books. Indiana's libraries provide access to librarians and digital resources to keep Hoosiers informed, educated, enriched, and entertained through this unprecedented time. We look forward to phasing in our services safely and according to local needs and guidance.

Frequently asked questions about public libraries and E.O. 20-26

Q: Does E.O.20-26 mean that a public library must open?

A: No, Governor Holcomb has been very clear that Indiana is taking a cautious path to resuming services based on science and facts. As the Governor has indicated, just because you are *allowed to* open does not mean that you *must* open. E.O. 20-26 enables library staff to return to working in the libraries as we prepare to phase in services according to local needs, capacity, and situation. Note that Indiana remains under a public health emergency under [Executive Order 20-25](#).

Q: How do I know what services my local library offers and the hours?

A: Most libraries maintain a website, social media, relationships with news media, and/or postal mail or email distribution lists for patrons. Please allow libraries time to communicate their new practices and hours as they bring staff back according to local policy. Check the library website or call the library.

Q: Do all libraries have to offer curbside pick-up (or any particular service)?

A: No, libraries will phase in the services that meet the needs of their local residents, based on staff and resource capacity, as well as local conditions. For example, some smaller library facilities may not have adequate space to maintain social distance for appointments or pickup. Some libraries may have limited staffing.

Q: Why isn't the library open for browsing, newspaper reading, computer lab use, public meetings, etc.?

A: The health and safety of the public is our top priority. Indiana's 236 public libraries have one of the highest circulation rates in the U.S. and received nearly 31 million visits by Hoosiers last year. While we are eager to serve the public, we must do our part to prevent a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. Libraries are phasing in services.

Q: How are libraries supporting eLearning?

A: Like schools and colleges, library facilities remain closed to student gatherings to prevent spread of the virus. Libraries extended Wi-Fi to parking lots to support students and teachers needing internet access. Libraries provide e-cards, expanded digital resources, virtual storytimes, programming, research databases, tutoring, and Ask-a-Librarian. Many public libraries have formal partnerships with schools and out-of-school time programs.

About us: The Indiana Library Federation, a nonprofit membership association, supports the Indiana library community during this COVID-19 global pandemic and throughout the year. Learn more at www.ilfonline.org. Or contact [Lucinda Nord](#), executive director.