

## Washoe County Library System Reopening Plan

### Introduction

On March 15th, 2020, Washoe County Library System closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Due to the nature of this virus, plans for reopening were difficult to develop. The library is a popular gathering place, one in which on average 10,000 Washoe County residents visit the library system every day. Therefore, when considering a reopening plan, we must proceed with caution to protect Washoe County Library staff and patrons.

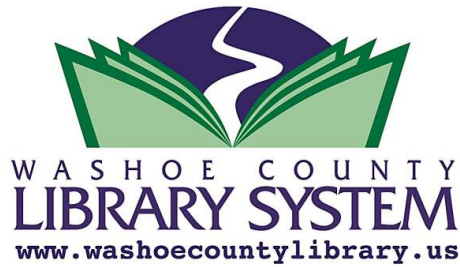
Our reopening plan was developed in conjunction with Governor's Sisolak's report Nevada United: Roadmap to Recovery (<https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NEVADA-UNITED-ROADMAP-TO-RECOVERY.pdf>) and cross-referenced with the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Health Security Study: Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19 Guidance for Governors ([http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/Projects/COVID/Estimation\\_update\\_041720.pdf](http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/Projects/COVID/Estimation_update_041720.pdf)). The Guidance for the Governors report is the basis for Governor Sisolak's report. I bring this to your attention as it specifically references libraries in its report. Furthermore, Washoe County Library is working with the State Library Reopening task force to find best practices as to when to safely reopen. We must take every precaution to determine safe practices.

When examining each phase of the Governor's plan we face numerous challenges:

1. Washoe County hiring freeze limits operational ability.
2. Vulnerable Library staff are unable to work further limiting the operational ability.
3. The enhanced burden placed on staff to ensure a safe environment.

Washoe County Library staff regularly interacts with the public, but in any situation, there are issues with compliance with the public and what library staff can reasonably enforce. Any restrictions on the number of patrons in a building create an unmanageable situation with the resources we have. If restrictions are set at ten or less, 50 or less, or even 100 or less it would require extra staff to halt patron entrance, headcount patrons, and forcibly exit patrons while others wait their turn. On average we have 50-100 patrons waiting at the door when we are ready to open. The conflict created in managing a crowd this size would be beyond the capacity to control. We are providing the following recommendations of open phases based on the Governor's plan.





## **PHASED REOPENING TIMELINE**

### **EACH PHASE IS CONTINGENT UPON A SUCCESSFUL PREVIOUS PHASE**

**(The Governor estimates 2-3 week assessment between each phase.)**

#### **Phase Zero: Stay Home for Nevada- (Phase since March 15th)**

Library Actions: All Libraries closed, staff are on a Work from Home Protocol. All services are virtual. Library Staff Library Assistant III and above are working on creating programs, managing collections, managing staff, managing public relations, and other functions. Library Assistant II and below are on paid administrative leave. Library Assistant II and Library Aide positions are public-facing and their main function is to keep operating hours for an open library.

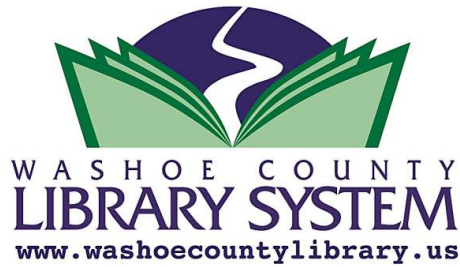
#### **Phase I: Battle Born Beginning- (State Started May 9<sup>th</sup>; Library activated Library Assistant and Library Aides for virtual work May 18<sup>th</sup>) (Library staff in building June 1 pending equipment)**

Governor's Summary: May open 1) outdoor spaces, 2) small businesses, and 3) select retail, under strict social distancing measures, hygiene, and occupancy controls. No social events or public gatherings over 10. Relax "Stay at Home" to encourage "Safer at Home." Vulnerable populations should remain home until the outbreak has subsided. Communicate the repercussions of a recurrence of disease growth. Strongly encourage improvised face-covering use by all.

Library Actions: Library closed to the public, virtual services enhanced, some in-branch work commences.

- Activate all library staff (including LA II and Library Aides), train for virtual work, and other work, as we prepare for our Virtual Summer Reading Program starting June 1.
- Technical Services Team in the building (no more than ten at a time) starting May 18
- Any staff who need to perform in-branch work will practice good hygiene and protocol. Newly activated Library Assistants and Library Aides will not enter buildings until June. Their work will remain virtual. All staff needs to be masked and gloved. All surfaces need to be wiped after use.
- Staff training and get ready for June 1 enhancements.
- Branches and departments develop their own staff schedules starting May 18, not in branch until June 1.
- Develop a FAQ for staff for virtual reference.
- Keep tight track and trace staff movements whenever in building.
- Provide Chromebooks and hotspots for staff who don't have access.
- Work on safe staff re-entry. Each Branch has PPE plan.
- Equipment ordered; branches prepared for staff.





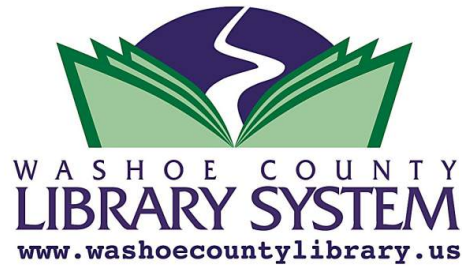
## **Phase II: Silver State Stabilization- (Estimated June 1-8)**

Summary: The broader opening of commerce/retail, services, and public life under extremely strict social distancing measures, hygiene, and occupancy controls. "Safer at Home" recommendations remain in place. Vulnerable populations should remain home until the outbreak has subsided. Strongly encourage improvised face-covering use by all.

Library Actions: Library Closed to the Public. Virtual Summer Reading Program launches. Enhanced virtual work. Library in-branch work.

The Library is identified as a community gathering space. Community gathering spaces can range from civic centers to places of worship. The risk is highly dependent on the size of the population and the size of the space. In this phase, we will still need to limit the population in the building, ensure social distancing, and ensure masks. This still poses an impossible challenge with the library staff available and the requirements of a safe environment. Again, each branch sees over 1,000 people a day. Libraries will still be closed to the public. Virtual services are ramped up further with a trained and 100% available workforce.

- Library virtual training enhances the virtual workforce for Summer Reading.
- Washoe County Library has canceled all physical programs through August 31.
  - We will be 100% virtual programs throughout the summer.
  - Most in-person programs have 50 or more in attendance.
- During this time, we will still be unable to control the population entering the building and using services.
- Virtual programs
- Enhanced digital collections
- Enhance virtual reference services
- Library Assistants and Aides may enter the building, but only after a PPE plan is in place at each branch and there is enough equipment to enact this plan.
- Book drops open June 8 for returning Monday through Friday 10am to 2pm.

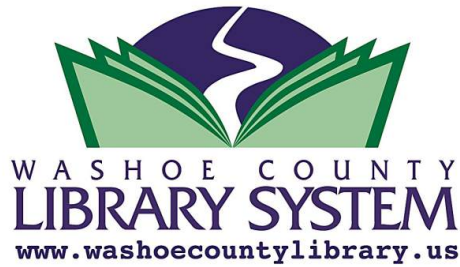


### **PHASE III: On the Road to Home Means Nevada- (Estimated June 15-July 1)**

Summary: Ease measures on some public and mass gatherings and non-essential travel with highly modified operations. Vulnerable populations should remain home until the outbreak has subsided.

Library Actions: Library closed to the public. Leadership Team reviews information to determine safe operational capacity. Virtual Summer Reading ongoing. Staff in buildings.

- Virtual Programs Enhanced:
  - Storytime
  - Book clubs
  - Nevada Reads
  - Virtual Reference begins
  - Some Good News Television Show begins
  - Virtual Programs (Historic Reno Preservation Society, Children's Events, etc)
- Physical Express Services begin June 15 (pending Phase III activation)
  - Grab and Go holds pick-up
  - Drive-up window activated
  - Patrons would have to use 100% of the self-check and staff interactions would be reduced as much as possible.
  - Branches Available for Limited Physical Express Service:
    - June 15 launch
    - Spanish Springs Grab and Go hold pick up available in the meeting room
    - South Valleys drive-up window available for hold pickups
    - Northwest Reno Library drive-up window available for holds pick-up
    - Incline Village Library Grab and Go Services available
    - July 1 Launch
    - Downtown Reno Library Grab and Go service begins
    - Sparks Library Grab and Go service begins
    - Sierra View Library Grab and Go service begins
    - North Valleys Library Grab and Go service begins
  - No Public access computers
  - Wi-fi turned on/can only be used outside



#### **PHASE IV: Home Means Nevada – Our New Normal (Estimated July 15-22)**

Summary: Most/all businesses operating, with enhanced hygiene and vigilance.

Library Actions: Library branches are open to the public with hygiene protocol in place. Need to ensure people can naturally separate with limited staff intervention

1. 100% self-check
2. Create six feet spaces (move furniture, move computers and mark spaces and provide signage)
3. Staff required PPE (facemask, cloth mask, gloves)
4. The public provided cloth mask upon entering
5. Provide computer assistance remotely
6. Clean surfaces regularly throughout the day
7. Installation of partitions to protect staff from public
8. Ensure separation of staff spaces
9. Book drops sit for at least 24 hours before shelving (pending IMLS research)
10. Install AMH/Smart Chutes at all branches to minimize friction with patrons returning items.
11. Remain fine free to limit staff interactions.
12. Library Director and Assistant Library Director meet with each Library Branch Leadership Team to discuss concerns and review plans for reopening.

#### **Conclusion**

General WCLS Leadership Team consensus is to open to the public in Phase IV. As previously stated, it is very difficult to ensure good hygiene, safe practices, and enforce rules with a limited workforce. The leadership team will begin to examine conditions once Phase III is implemented. It is possible that the library could open any time after Phase III, but it is likely that we will have a mid-July opening in a best-case scenario.

Libraries are a flexible service industry. Our work is critical to all of Washoe County. We are at the forefront of early literacy activities ensuring every child is ready to read by the third grade. We provide critical support to STEAM education. We are a lifeline to patrons through our public access computers and wireless internet. We connect people with information and ideas for the betterment of our community. Many of these services can be accomplished virtually as we have demonstrated so far. However, our most vulnerable populations are left out in this virtual scenario. That being said, this same population is the most susceptible to catching COVID-19 and would be without the resources to survive it. This population is most at risk of becoming sick and dying on a massive scale, overwhelming local capacity, and endangering everyone in the community. While it is frustrating that we cannot be open to provide service physically during this time period, the consequences of premature actions would be devastating and irreversible. We appreciate the patience of everyone in Washoe County while we navigate this turbulent time. We hope to serve and see everyone in person soon.

