

Covid-19: The Move from “Orange” to “Yellow”

By Colleen Eggett

Governor Gary Herbert moved most of the State of Utah from “Orange” to “Yellow”, or from moderate risk to low risk, for Covid-19 as of Saturday May 16, 2020 at 12:01 AM. Six areas that have been hardest hit by the pandemic will remain in the “orange” phase: Grand County, Summit County, Wasatch County, Salt Lake City, Magna, and West Valley City at present. [View the full order.](#)



The advice is to open in safe ways, using the best practices found on the coronavirus.utah.gov website.

In the low-risk phase, the public should still maintain social distancing and wear masks in public where social distancing isn't possible. Workers are encouraged to continue telecommuting if they can. At-risk people, or those who are 65 or older and those with special health needs, should continue to follow “high risk” protocols, [Governor Herbert](#) advised.

What does that mean for Utah's libraries? For some, it may be moving faster than what we were prepared for. For others, it may be a welcome relief. [Utah's libraries are opening in varying degrees](#) at this time, most with limited service. Here are some best practices for moving from Orange to Yellow.

- *Remember how vitally important you are in the lives of the people you serve. You are their lifeline to being able to interact with state and local government officials, sign up for needed services, apply for a job, connect with family and friends, and do their needed business. [FEMA recognizes libraries as essential community organizations](#), and this is because you are. Be present and dependable for the people you serve.*
- *Restoration of in-person services will require strict adherence to [CDC guidelines](#) and [Utah's guidelines](#) regarding physical distancing, use of protective equipment, proper sanitation, and the disinfecting of common and high-traffic areas.*

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- *There can be challenges with keeping staff connected and making them feel part of a team, especially when some are working from home, others from work, and there are changing roles for many. We need to give as much support and encouragement to our staff as we possibly can.*

Here is a checklist for your consideration.

1. *Start to open with curbside or lobby service only. Have a process for the public to pick up items, and a process for the staff that is safe for all. Increase services as appropriate.*
2. *Open with limited services.*
 - a. *Communicate with your City or County officials and the public about service restoration. Make sure you are in agreement with your City/County, and that everyone knows what you are doing and when, in advance.*
 - b. *You may need to limit the space in your library to 25-50% of capacity, of the areas that are open to the public. How do you determine that? Contact your local Fire Chief and they can assist you in making a good decision. Then put signage around the building, on your website, and on social media. The default is no more than 50 at a time.*
 - c. *Provide signage or markers on the floor for lines in front of service desks.*
 - d. *Service hours. You may need to limit hours because staffing needs are different right now. Some staff will still need to telework. Consider posting someone at entry points, watching for safety and social distancing, disinfecting checkout areas and other public areas, helping people, and pulling books for people. It will take extra work to get prepared for the next day. Being open shorter hours will help existing staff handle the increased demand for helping the public—all from a distance.*
 - i. *The State Library will not penalize you if you need to keep different hours during this Covid crisis, for library certification purposes. We know that these are different times. Someday life will go back to completely normal and that is when the required hours of operation will be back into effect.*

- e. *Library events seem unfeasible until we are in a green phase. Even with a limit of 50 people at a time and with masks on everyone, attendees may not practice safe social distancing. Children will have a near impossible time on this.*
- f. *Physical space differences.*
 - i. *Install plexiglass screens in front of public facing desks.*
 - ii. *Consolidate service points.*
 - iii. *Determine access to library stacks. Consider keeping stacks closed and bringing materials to patrons so they can pick them up in a designated area, with staff using masks and gloves.*
 - iv. *Regular cleaning and disinfecting of public areas. Janitors cannot keep up with demand. Do you need staff assigned to wipe down tables etc.? Antiseptic wipes so people can do it themselves? Signs posted stating expectations? This can get out of control fast.*
 - v. *Move computers, tables, and chairs at least 6 feet apart in all directions.*

I hope this is a helpful guide. Listen to others and they will help you make decisions that benefit all.