

W.H. Walters Free Public Library

Health, Safety, and Public Health Emergency Policy

(Replaces 5/17/2021 PPE Emergency Policy)

Purpose

The W.H. Walters Free Public Library is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and accessible environment for all patrons, staff, and visitors. The Library is empowered to take reasonable and necessary steps to protect public health and safety while continuing to fulfill its mission of providing access to information, resources and services.

The goals of this policy are to:

- Promote a safe and healthy environment for patrons and staff.
- Maintain uninterrupted access to library services whenever possible.
- Establish procedures to address public health concerns and emergencies.
- Provide flexibility to respond to future public health guidance or government mandates.

Library staff have the authority to enforce this policy, consistent with the Library's Patron Code of Conduct and other adopted policies.

General Health and Safety Guidelines

To maintain a safe and comfortable environment:

- Individuals who are experiencing symptoms of a contagious illness (such as fever, cough, chills, or other flu-like symptoms) are strongly encouraged to stay home. If patrons pose a risk to others, they be asked to leave the library and return when well.
- Patrons are encouraged to practice good hygiene, including proper handwashing and covering coughs or sneezes.
- Face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) are not required under normal operating conditions. However, patrons and staff may voluntarily wear PPE at their own discretion.
- The Library reserves the right to establish temporary health and safety measures if required by local, state, or federal authorities, or if deemed necessary to protect public health.

Access to Library Services

Under normal operating conditions:

- There are no general time limits for browsing or computer use, except as governed by the Library's Computer and Internet Use Policy.
- Computer access is available on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to existing Library policies.
- Library programs, meetings, and group visits are permitted in accordance with
- Reasonable accommodations, including phone or email assistance, will be provided when possible.

Public Health Emergencies

In the event of a declared public health emergency, epidemic, pandemic, or government-mandated restrictions, the Library may temporarily implement additional measures. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Face covering requirements
- Social distancing requirements
- Occupancy limits
- Modified hours of operation
- Appointment-based services
- Time limits for computer or facility use
- Suspension or modification of in-person programs
- Temporary closure of the facility

Such measures will be based on guidance from applicable authorities, including:

- New Jersey State Government
- Warren County Health Department
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Local municipal officials

Enforcement

Failure to comply with temporary health and safety requirements implemented during a declared public health emergency may result in enforcement actions consistent with the Library's Patron Code of Conduct, including suspension of library privileges or removal from the premises.

Authority & Review

This policy shall be administered by the Library Director and enforced by authorized Library staff.

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees and revised as necessary to reflect current best practices, legal requirements, and operational needs.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: May 18, 2026