



The Voice of the Library Community

New York Library Association

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Statement from New York Library Association On Library Closures in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

The New York Library Association (NYLA) is committed to supporting its members, library workers, and their patrons during this difficult time. During times of crisis, libraries have a critical role to play in supporting the communities they serve, both in-person or electronically. By connecting patrons with accurate information, libraries empower users to act in a thoughtful and measured manner. That said, there are times when community health and the public good surpasses the desire for libraries to operate.

Libraries are a gathering place in the community, frequently bringing together significant numbers of people (far exceeding the current CDC guidelines both in numbers of patrons and staff). In order to minimize opportunities for transmission, and to protect both community members' health and library employees, the New York Library Association is recommending that libraries in New York State suspend public operations.

Governor Cuomo has issued a series of Executive Orders in relation to COVID-19. Following is NYLA's interpretation of those orders:

[Executive Order 202.5](#)

"Additionally, all places of public amusement, whether indoors or outdoors, including but not limited to, locations with amusement rides, carnivals, amusement parks, water parks, aquariums, zoos, arcades, fairs, children's play centers, funplexes, theme parks, bowling alleys, family and children's attractions shall likewise be closed to the public at 8 p.m. on March 19."

While libraries are not defined as a place of public amusement, we believe that the intent of this directive applies to libraries, and therefore they should be closed to the public by 8p.m. on March 19.

[Executive Order 202.6](#)

"Effective on March 20 at 8 p.m.: All businesses and not-for-profit entities in the state shall utilize, to the maximum extent possible, any telecommuting or work from home procedures that they can safely utilize. Each employer shall reduce the in-person workforce at any work locations by 50% no later than March 20 at 8 p.m."

While a library is certainly an essential service for the social and cultural health of a community, it is not an essential service as detailed in the exceptions outlined in E.O. 202.6, and therefore libraries who are not opting to close to the public (as stipulated in E.O. 202.5) are subject to the 50% workforce reduction standards.

Again - New York Library Association is recommending that libraries in New York State suspend public operations.

NYLA calls upon Governor Cuomo to issue unequivocal guidance calling for the closure of New York's libraries in parity with public school operations. In the meantime, we are awaiting guidance from the Economic Development Corporation (anticipated by 5p.m. March 19) for clarity on the above-mentioned Executive Orders.

About NYLA:

The New York Library Association (NYLA) is the voice of the library community in New York. NYLA is the oldest state library association in the country and represents school, college, special and public libraries, library staff, trustees, and students from around the state.

NYLA is the only statewide organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of all libraries and library staff in Albany and serves as the spokesperson on library matters to the media and public policymakers.

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