

NYS Cluster Action Initiative

On October 6, 2020, Governor Cuomo [announced the Cluster Action Initiative](#) to redefine operations under the NYS Forward Phase IV framework. The Cluster Action Initiative is in response to recent surges in COVID-19 cases within specific communities across the state.

Libraries are not specifically referenced, but are generally assumed to be categorized as **Non-Essential Business - Retail**. Your local municipality may have a different understanding of the appropriate categorization of the public library. Directors and Boards should be aware of their community's status relative to this initiative and the accepted categorization, *Non-Essential Business – Retail* or another, to plan potential next steps should changes in the cluster zone status occur.

Complete information on the Cluster Zone Initiative can be found at <https://forward.ny.gov/cluster-action-initiative> and <https://esd.ny.gov/ny-cluster-action-initiative-guidance>.

The new rules are in effect for a minimum of 14 days.

The initiative is composed of three steps:

1. Reduce in-person activities and interactions within the cluster, similar to New York on PAUSE;
2. Take action in the area surrounding the cluster to stop the spread; and
3. Take precautionary action in the outlying communities.

Zone Guidance

● **Yellow (Precautionary Zone)** – Permitted services that may be offered include curbside or lobby service, access to circulation desk, access to public computers in limited time amounts and in physically distanced space, access to stacks, limited access to tables, seating and bathrooms. Libraries may also host small meetings (if spacing allows) and provide remote/virtual services. Libraries should consider no more than a total of 25 people in the building at one time (this includes a combination of BOTH patrons and staff). These are the highest forms of library service that may be considered when a library is located in a yellow zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering any or all of these services at this time, due to building occupancy restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote/virtual services only. Staff should keep a count of the number of people in the building at all times, so as to not exceed recommended limits. Public computers, surfaces, hardware and bathrooms must be cleaned regularly.

● **Orange (Warning Zone)** – Curbside or Lobby service, limited access to circulation desk, limited access to public computers (restricted by appointment and in limited amounts of time) and remote/virtual services are the highest forms of service that may be considered when a library is in an orange zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering any or all of these services at this time, due to building occupancy restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote/virtual services only. No more than 10 people should be in the library building at one time (this includes a total combined number of BOTH patrons and staff). Staff should keep a count of the number of people in the building at all times, so as to not exceed the limit. Public computers, surfaces, door handles, etc. must be wiped clean after each use.

● **Red Zone (Cluster Itself)** – The library building is closed to the public. Curbside or remote/virtual services are the only services allowed. Only one library staff member can be in the building at any point in time to facilitate curbside service. All other staff would work remotely. Curbside service is the highest form of in-person service that can be offered when a library is in a red zone. If a library does not feel comfortable offering curbside service at this time, due to the staffing restrictions or other concerns, they should facilitate remote/virtual services only.

Zone Level	Curbside or Lobby Service	Access to Public Computers	Access to Stacks	Access to Tables &/or Seating	Access to Bathrooms	Meetings Allowed	Onsite Programs	Remote Services	Notes
YELLOW	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Max total of 25 people in building.
ORANGE	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	No	No	No	Yes	Max total of 10 people in building.
RED	Curbside only	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Only one staff member at a time in building for curbside.

*Staff monitoring is required to limit the number of people in the building and to ensuring the cleaning of surfaces and computers after each use.

You can check what zone your library's current zone at <https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov/#/home>. Please note that it may take up to 24 hours for this Hotspot Lookup site to be updated with the most current address information.

Libraries can also track up-to-date cases by visiting Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 US Cases by County/State interactive map: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>.

**Actions for Temporarily Closed Libraries:
WLS Delivery, ILS/Evergreen Options, Sharing Status Information**

Report all temporary library closures (and re-openings) to the directors' email list (dirts2@wlsmail.org) and update the [Status of Westchester Libraries](#) shared Google document as soon as possible. Update your library's outgoing phone message and provide explanatory signage on building entrances, the library's website and social media to communicate closures to your community.

Email the WLS Delivery service (wlsdelivery@wlsmail.org) to indicate if the library will be able to receive delivery drop-offs. WLS Delivery can continue to deliver library materials to *Temporarily Closed* members, but drivers will not pick up outgoing deliveries while the library is closed. Member libraries are encouraged to close book drops during Temporary Closures.

If you anticipate your library will be closed for more than 48 hours, please update the *Emergency Closed Dates* settings in Evergreen to reflect your expected closed dates. This will extend due dates and hold shelf expiration dates. WLS staff can assist you with this if necessary. Notify the WLS IT Helpdesk (helpdesk@wlsmail.org) or (914) 674-3616 if you require assistance with the ILS/Evergreen Emergency Closed Dates settings.

11/18/20

Special thanks to the Southern Tier Library System for allowing WLS to base this document on their documents and for sharing their "lessons learned" in working within the cluster zones.