



106 Washington Avenue, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901-4985

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 22, 2021
TO: Oshkosh Public Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, Library Director
RE: Gating Criteria and Revised Phase Two Re-Opening Plan

Since the beginning of the pandemic in March, 2020, we here at Oshkosh Public Library have striven to maintain the continuity of high quality library service to the community: OPL patrons were offered enhanced remote access to digital reading resources like eBooks, eAudiobooks, and information resources like Ancestry.com. OPL staff continued to provide information and support via telephone and email, and, later, live chat from the website. Beginning on April 24, 2020, curbside contactless pickup of physical library materials was initiated. In order to slow the spread of COVID-19, access to the library building as a public place was initially prohibited. After August 3, 2020, building access was allowed, mainly by appointment and for a limited range of in-person services.

The case for a new gating measure:

Each step we have taken, from lockdown to allowing patrons to carry out library materials from the lobby, has involved a risk-to-benefit analysis. At each step, we have sought to balance risks to the health and safety of the public and our staff with the benefits that patrons receive from our services.

From the beginning of the pandemic, we have agreed to look to data in making decisions about services inside the library building. Over this time, as the world's understanding of and response to the pandemic has evolved, the data tools we relied upon for risk assessment and decision-making have also changed.

First, we used the Wisconsin Department of Health Services dashboard for the state as a whole. When WI DHS phased out that tool in favor of county and regional activity rankings, we shifted to that tool. We required the county and regional COVID-19 burden to be "Medium" or "Low" before opening the building to book browsers. When the state added a new top-level ranking to the dashboard ("Critically High"), the prospect for moving to Phase Two services seemed distant.

Now, after conferring with Mike Stanley, the City of Oshkosh's Fire Chief and Emergency Operations Coordinator, I am putting forward a new measure as a risk analysis and decision-making tool: the seven-day rolling average of confirmed-plus-probable COVID-19 cases reported in Winnebago County. This measure is updated daily by the Winnebago County Health Department. Rather than offering us an unequivocal "go" signal, this measure allows us to track the trend; to see if we are "moving in the right direction" or not. Since January 8, 2020, I have

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been tracking this measure as well as a 90-day average. At the time of this writing, the confirmed-plus-probable case number for January 22, 2021 is 54, which is about 40% below the 90-day average (i.e., 91) for the measure. At the time of the next regular library board meeting, I will share a report showing the available data trend from January 8 through the day of the meeting. If both the seven-day rolling average and the 90-day average of that measure both show a decreasing trend, I will recommend that the board approve implementation of the Phase Two Re-Opening Plan. One may follow a line graph of the trend on the Winnebago County Health Department's COVID-19 page: start at <https://www.co.winnebago.wi.us/health>, link to the COVID-19 page and scroll down to a link that says "Open the Winnebago County dashboard in a new window."

Requested Library Board Action:

I ask the board to consider approving the revised Phase Two Re-Opening Plan included in the meeting packet for the January 28, 2021 meeting. The only substantive changes to the plan, previously approved on September 24, 2020, are to the gating criteria and to add emphasis to the requirement for proper masking and distancing behavior. Approval of the revised plan will constitute approval of using the trend in the seven-day rolling average of confirmed-plus-probable COVID-19 cases reported by the Winnebago County Health Department, as the primary measure for making decisions about allowing public access to the library building. It also entrusts the interpretation of the data trends and adjustment of library services to the Library Director.

If not approved, the current gating criteria of county and regional COVID-19 activity, reported weekly by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, will remain in force.