

July 20 press release.

Dear Library patrons,

The safety of patrons and staff of the Valley City Barnes County Public Library are the highest priority of the Board of Directors. Therefore, the Board established a 4-stage plan in March 2020 to deal with the current COVID-19 pandemic and create criteria for reopening safely. It also established an executive committee which meets weekly and inform the decisions of the board.

The board is acutely aware that the VCBC Public library is not just about lending books but also about access to WIFI, technology and programs. Therefore, the VCBC public library created virtually programming and started curbside pick-up on June 1st. Unfortunately, this step does not allow for patrons to use the computers. We, as a board, are aware this is an essential need in our community and have been discussing how to create access while minimizing risk for both patrons and our staff.

Unfortunately, the design of the building does not lend itself for easy physical distancing between patrons and staff. The latest data shows repeated and extended contact with people increases the change of spreading the infection. The board understands the need for access to services but also needs to balance the need to reduce the risk of infection and ensure the safety of our staff. Therefore, the Board decided on July 17th board meeting to move to limited reopening. The board established the following rules to ensure safety of both patrons and staff. These rules are based on the recommendations of the CDC and the American Library Association and have been discussed and endorsed by Theresa Will of the City County Health Department in Valley City

- Entry is by appointment only. Patrons can use computers and/or browse the collection and select materials including papers and magazines. Appointment can be made by calling the VCBC Public Library (701-845-3821)
- Entry is through the south main entrance only. Other entrances will remain closed for patrons.
- Appointments are available from 12-5 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and from 12-7 pm on Tuesday and Thursdays.
- Only 5 patrons are allowed in the building at any given time to ensure proper physical distancing
- Patrons are allowed in the building for 30 minutes at the time (limiting time reduces the chance of infection).
- No patrons under 15 years old allowed in the building.
- Patrons are asked to perform a self-check for COVID-19 symptoms upon entering. Self-check information will be posted on all entrances.

- Patrons and staff are *required* to wear mask. This decision is made because the impossibility to separate staff and patrons by physical barriers. In addition, a review of 172 studies studying the effect of wearing masks shows that wearing mask significantly reduced the change of infection. *Patrons are not allowed to enter the building without a mask.*
- Patrons are required to use hand sanitizer upon entering the building
- Computer stations and surfaces are sanitized after each use. The staff has established a cleaning and disinfection protocol.
- Computer stations are separated by sneeze guard

Unfortunately, some of the preventative measures for infection control have been politicized. We have heard your message on giving patrons access to the public library. What we are asking in return is support for the rules described above. Failure by patrons to follow the rules will increase the change of infection and may force the board to close the library to patrons again making it necessary to go back to curbside only or closure. Infection of a patron or staff member will require a two-week quarantine for all staff to prevent future spread of this disease.

Sincerely,

Hilde van Gijssel,
President Board of Directors
Valley City Barnes County Public Library

Further information:

The library will be continuing curbside service. We recognize not all patrons may feel comfortable coming into the building, even with the above precautions in place. We are aware we have patrons who, for various reasons, are not going out in public at this time. We respect your decision and want to make sure you can still access library materials.

The July 1st updated checkout limits will remain in place; 5 items total per patron and 20 total items per family. Patrons can reserve 5 items and the 3 DVDs limit has not changed. Late fees will continue to be suspended for DVDs.

Please return all items in the drive-up book return so they can go into 48-hour quarantine. Returning items in the building will create more work for staff.

The library will continue to remain closed on Saturdays.

All library programming will remain virtual until further notice.

Finally, from all the staff; welcome back, we have missed you.