

Recommendation of the Central Library Council of the Czech Republic for the operation of libraries from 18. 5. 2020

This document recommends the basic operating conditions of public libraries or libraries providing public library and information services for libraries (VKIS) after the end of the emergency, but while it is still necessary to comply with anti-epidemic measures and recommendations.

This document lists only those basic operating conditions that differ from the standard conditions resulting from the hygiene, labour and other regulations currently in force (e.g. they are set beyond these conditions).

The basic objective of these recommendations is the safe return of public libraries to a wide range of services without compromising the public or their own employees.

Input

At the entrance to the library, the visitor disinfects his hands, with the disinfectant provided by the library operator.

Access to the library premises is allowed for readers and visitors to events and courses, but always with their mouths and nose covered and subject to the rules of social distancing (safe distance between persons) and the limit of the given library premises. The library employee takes care to observe the limited number of persons and their spacing. With the framework security limit of persons as well as with other rules of safe use of the library, readers and visitors are met at the entrance to the library. If the operating conditions of the library allow, it is recommended that an assistant be available near the library entrance to explain the rules of operation or to ensure compliance with them.

Movement

A library can limit access to some of its premises if it requires secure work with the collection or the need to limit the number of people in that space.

Stay

Study in the library, meetings, teaching and other residential services are possible, unless this violates the general rules of safe separation of persons (approx. 2 m).

Operating hours

The library shall determine the opening hours taking into account the interests of the public, while allowing for regular maintenance and hygiene of premises and surfaces. The library may determine part of the opening hours for priority use by seniors or consider setting aside certain parts of its operating hours for families with children, who can better adapt the premises and conditions of service at such a time.

Social distance

Public

The basic principle of the safe operation of the public library is to observe a sufficient distance between people (about 2 m), ensuring the reduction of the risk of infection. Therefore, it is appropriate to adapt this fact to the places of service in the library and the way readers are serviced. Suitable means are protective transparent partitions at service points and possible layout of service points even outside the counters in the library premises. These measures are intended to ensure that, even with direct user service, there is no increased risk of transmission of infection between employees and the public. In general, the principle of individualization of services applies.

Employees

The same safe contact rules apply to employees. When organising work, it is recommended to divide the work team into smaller groups that will meet as little as possible in the workplace. If the activity and operation of the library allows this, it is recommended to take advantage of the possibility of remote work. The aim of this measure is to maintain library services even if someone gets sick in one of the working groups; then there would be no need for the entire library to be quarantined.

Protective equipment

Public

Upon entering the library, visitors are required to be provided with hand sanitiser or protective gloves. In larger libraries it is advisable to distribute hand disinfection in other library areas. To use the services of the library, it is necessary to observe the protection of the mouth and nose with a mask, respirator or other appropriate means.

Readers and visitors are obliged to comply with the specified hygiene rules; non-compliance is a reason for not letting them into the library and refusing to provide services.

Employees

Employees shall use mouth and nose protection with a mask, respirator or other appropriate means, throughout the period of work, when in contact with the public or other employees. They use protective gloves when handling library collections and providing services. At the same time, they have at their disposal a suitable hand disinfectant and a means with which they can treat their work equipment and the nearest surroundings (desks, counters, etc.). Where possible and effective, it is advisable to use protective plexi shields for counters or personal face shields.

The employer is obliged to provide suitable conditions for breaks for food and rest, with emphasis on compliance with the rules of the necessary social distance – alternating in kitchens, canteens, etc.

Cleaning

The library operator shall ensure a sufficient number of suitable means for cleaning up premises and surfaces. Frequent ventilation of buildings is an essential preventive factor (it is recommended once an hour for at least 5 minutes).

Cleaning staff are informed and informed about hygiene principles and the need to clean and disinfect surfaces and objects.

Thorough cleaning of all rooms in which readers, visitors and library staff are located is carried out at least once a day.

Increased attention is also paid to the disinfection of tables and surfaces, such as the doorknobs, taps, seating in public areas, floors of used areas, panels of self-service copiers, scanners, keyboards and mice of public computers, toilets, etc.

Toilets are equipped with soap in the dispenser and disposable paper towels or dryers for safe drying of hands. The location of the disinfection dispenser is also suitable.

Waste bins must be emptied at least once a day in a safe manner (removable disposable bags must be used). It is important to set aside and mark a waste bin designed for used disposable protective equipment and disinfect its opening with an alcohol solution.

Collections

Work with the library collection has had to reckon with the recommendation to hold returned books in quarantine boxes for 48 hours during the period of validity of the emergency measures. It is up to the individual decision of the library operator whether to continue to practice the quarantine measures. In any case, library collections and their handling may be a source of concern about the transmission of the disease. Therefore, it is good to remind this of this fact repeatedly to both library staff and readers and visitors, and to promote the safe handling of the collection in the long term, supported by sufficient hand disinfection, protective gloves for library staff, compliance with safe spacing between people, and increased hygienic maintenance of those premises and facilities where the library fund is repeatedly handled (lending, return areas, etc.). There is no fundamental reason for limiting the availability of free choice of books in libraries.

Employees

Employees, including employees belonging to the risk group (age over 65 with associated chronic diseases, chronic lung disease, heart or major blood vessels with long-term systemic pharmacological treatment, etc.), must perform their work duties. If this is organisationally possible, the library operator may allow employees belonging to the risk group who come into direct contact with a larger number of other persons in the course of their work, at their request, to modify the way in which they perform their duties (for example, to allow work from home). If such arrangements for work duties are not possible organisationally, the employee (by doctor's certificate) should prove that he belongs to a risk group; following this, an employee can agree to grant unpaid leave (leave without compensation for wages or salary).

Services

These recommendations are issued in connection with the gradual release of emergency conditions and the return to operation of the company without significant traffic restrictions. It is therefore logical that public libraries should also return to the wider range of services they will offer to the public, but always with respect to the principles of health and safety.

Borrowing

The library should alert the reader to the risk of infection from the books – however very small – and offer them the possibility of protection by leaving the books and other documents from the library for a few days before using them "rest". In this context, libraries will also consider the length of the borrowing period.

Delivery services

The discussed possibility of library services at the time of the emergency was a delivery service to the elderly. There is still extreme caution in the provision of such a service – compliance with all hygiene rules when working with the Fund, compliance with the principle of wearing personal protection aids by employees in the preparation of such documents and when passing them back to readers and taking funds back, safe distance in communication.

Operation of study rooms

Full-time use of services and on-the-spot study is possible, the basic condition remains compliance with the principle of safe distance and hygienically responsible behavior – performing hand disinfection, covering the nose and mouth with a mask, etc. Therefore, the restriction of the supply of seating furniture appears to be expedient in order to respect the required spacing. For capacity reasons, the library can also subsequently introduce an ordering system to places in study rooms.

Educational and cultural events

In the library it is possible to organize cultural and educational events, with the current rules of collection for them, i.e. above all the safe distance rule. Therefore, it is necessary to either limit the usual number of visitors to the event or to hold the event in a larger space, which will allow the safe distance between participants to be maintained. In appropriate weather conditions, the solution is to organize events outdoors.

E-services

At the time of the state of emergency, many libraries created, expanded or emphasized the offer of online services – from e-books to the creation of their own e-content (conducting interviews with writers, preparing video presentations of book market news, organizing webinars, lectures, etc.). It is recommended to continue to develop these services and to offer them to traditional library readers.

Services for children

The basic conditions for services to children are the same as for adult services. It is recommended that the library apply to an appropriate extent the rules of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which apply to leisure centres: http://www.msmt.cz/file/52784_1_1/.

Food and drinks in the library

If the library provides drinks or food to its visitors, this is fully covered by the hygiene regulations for this activity in the current version, see, for example, Government Resolution No 493 of 30 June 2003 on the implementation of the European Union's external action report. 4. 2020, available from: <https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/RCIABPAABPK7>.