

Idaho Library Association  
4911 N Shirley Ave, Boise, Idaho 83703  
<http://idaholibraries.org/>



January 26, 2021

Dear CVAC Task Force, and Idaho Health & Welfare,

On behalf of the Idaho Library Association (ILA), we thank you for your efforts to support Idahoans during these times of uncertainty and difficulty. Fortunately, we have now reached the stage where vaccinations are available and being distributed. With the limited supply available, we understand prioritizing vaccines for health care workers and high-risk. ILA believes that a population has been missed in the prioritization list. We ask that you include public and academic library workers with their fellow educators and critical community service workers as eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 2 of Idaho's rollout.

The [ACIP COVID-19 Vaccines Work Group](#) guidelines published by the CDC include library employees as an occupational group most likely to be exposed at work in the Education sector. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, library workers have provided critical in-person services such as computer and internet access; circulating technology and reading materials that families and individuals rely upon; assisting residents with unemployment and housing or food assistance forms; and more. Library workers in Idaho have innovated and launched new services such as curbside, home delivery, and virtual programs. These efforts have been made in order to balance the needs of the community with the safety of employees. And indeed, in Idaho, libraries provide critical educational and literacy support to our communities across the state. Vaccinating library staff will allow us to continue serving all of our patrons, especially those on the disadvantaged end of the "digital divide." While public libraries weren't identified as essential workers in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become abundantly clear that public libraries are indeed essential in Idaho communities.

- With current research indicating literacy loss in students through this pandemic, we assert that libraries provide children with access to books and other reading materials.
- Public libraries provide essential services to the unemployed. We assert that public libraries provide critical access and support for job seekers.
- Libraries provide essential connections in a community. With COVID forcing people to distance or isolate, many individuals are suffering from disconnectedness. We assert that libraries offer residents the opportunity for human connection in safe environments. In addition, library facilities provide communities with access to computers, periodicals, and seating

- Although many public libraries have reduced or modified their services in response to the pandemic, academic libraries operate under the umbrella of their parent institutions. Academic library workers are providing in-person service to the public as well as their campus communities and are engaging in significant handling of shared physical materials from all over the country. Some institutions are also returning to instruction and programming efforts that put them back in front of classrooms full of people.

Library workers, like other essential workers, directly interface with the general public and handle books and objects shared by others in the community. [REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums \(REALM\)](#), a research project conducted by OCLC, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Battelle detected the virus on common library surfaces for as many as 6 days in certain conditions. The virus transmission risk may be lower from surfaces, but the risk is higher when adding the risk factors together in a library setting - indoors for extended periods of time; hundreds to thousands of visitors to these indoor spaces; handling of numerous shared objects that are difficult to sanitize. This combination of risk factors places library workers in higher-risk exposure situations on a daily basis.

We ask that you please add library workers to the Phase 2 distribution so that our employees can safely serve our communities. Library workers care deeply about providing service, and vaccination is one of the easiest ways to protect them. Please don't make libraries continue to make the choice between helping people and keeping their employees safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Campbell, Idaho Library Association President

And the Idaho Library Association Board of Directors

CC: Governor Little