



Oregon Library Association

Statement to Prioritize Library Workers in COVID Vaccine Distribution

Adopted February 17, 2021

The Oregon Library Association (OLA) urges the Office of the Governor, Oregon Health Authority, academic leaders, and local government leaders and officials at the county and city level to prioritize access to vaccinations for library workers who are at heightened risk for exposure to COVID-19, such as those providing in-person services.

While school library workers were included in Phase 1B, public and academic library workers, along with law libraries and other special libraries were not included. All library workers must be included in Phase 1B of Oregon's vaccination distribution plan as a high-risk service during the pandemic.

Public and academic libraries provide essential services in local communities across the state, not only during prosperous times, but even more so during economic crises. Libraries serve as important community resources supporting education, technology access, literacy development, employment, legal needs, student success, research, and social infrastructure. Now more than ever, it is crucial to safely continue these important library services for residents across Oregon, as libraries are key partners in reopening the state.

Libraries around the state have taken the difficult but necessary action of reducing in-person services and increasing safety measures for the sake of broader community health. In addition to online services, at various times throughout the pandemic Oregon libraries have provided a variety of in-person patron services. These services include, but are not limited to, curbside delivery of library materials, information services, research assistance, remote learning support, book distribution at free lunch sites, outreach to daycare centers, schools, and social services, and access to and assistance with computers, laptops, and Wi-Fi hotspots.

OLA adamantly supports a safe working environment for all library workers. Vaccinating library workers will significantly reduce their risk of infection and provide opportunity for libraries to restore services and reopen, while reducing community spread as well.

OLA acknowledges public health officials are faced with difficult, complex decisions about whom to prioritize for vaccines, and that libraries and library systems are governed in different ways and adhere to different policymakers. However, Oregon's economic recovery depends immeasurably on open libraries, healthy library workers, and vital library services as we move forward. Libraries are typically the only place in a community supplying free Wi-Fi and computer use to all residents. Libraries are vital for providing access to people in need, especially for unemployment and other social benefits.

We are calling on the Office of the Governor, Oregon Health Authority, academic leaders, and local government leaders and officials at the county and city level to include librarians and library workers in the Phase 1B vaccination plans. Libraries are eager to help our state and local communities. OLA welcomes any questions you may have or ideas on how libraries can help during this time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Lasky".

Kate Lasky,
Oregon Library Association President 2020-21