

January 12, 2021

Dr. Ngozi O. Ezike
Illinois Department of Public Health
525-535 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, IL 62761



Illinois Library
Association

Dear Dr. Ezike:

We are reaching out to you because public and school libraries are important, public-facing pillars of community support and service in Illinois, regarding **library workers' eligibility to receive a COVID-19 vaccine during the first phases of statewide distribution.**

First, we see included in Phase 1b "Education sector, including teachers and support staff." **We would like to confirm that school librarians are included in Phase 1b**, as these personnel are licensed educators. In schools where non-librarians are operating the library, they are considered "support staff." In all cases, they are key to school reopenings in their primary capacity to help students and faculty access the information they need to complete assignments and conduct research. They have been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic to make resources available electronically and are ready and eager to return to their libraries provided it can be done safely.

Second, we want to ensure that **public librarians in communities where libraries have already re-opened to in-person public services, or plan to do so, are eligible for vaccination in Phase 1b or 1c at the latest.** Throughout the pandemic the availability of public, in-person library services has been determined on a local, not statewide, basis; we are encouraging our local libraries to also reach out to their county departments of health.

Illinois public libraries serve residents with vital resources. After the first stay-at-home orders were issued in March 2020, many libraries closed our doors to in-person public services in the interest of combatting community spread, with virtual services remaining, and even increasing: online story time, redirected expenditure toward increased e-books, remote/phone reference service, and more. As the Restore Illinois plan began to re-open the state, we too have re-opened gradually to in-person public service, starting with curbside pick-up of library materials, capacity limits based on retail guidelines as advised by this department, limited time for computer use and assistance, and other reference services including helping people fill out necessary governmental application forms (notary, passports), access job retraining and application resources, and so on. These are all services that entities covered in Phase 1b and 1c perform; libraries perform them too.

We have been gratified by the public demand for our collections, services, and programs. No one wants the library to be fully open more than librarians ourselves. Sadly, as cases have surged again, some are having to close our doors again, as staff members are diagnosed and/or the spread in our communities has increased. **In order to continue to respond fully to residents' needs, it is vital that library staff receive vaccines. More than 63 million visits to Illinois public libraries are made each year.** We want libraries to continue to serve as key partners in the re-opening of our state, and we want to do so safely for the sake of the library staff and their families, and also to prevent the library, where so many members of the public gather, from becoming a point of community spread.

We would be happy to speak further about library services and the importance of library staff receiving the vaccine. Please reach out to us with any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Diane Foote in blue ink.

Diane Foote
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Veronica De Fazio in blue ink.

Veronica De Fazio
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