



October 13, 2021

Recently, the library district has been asked about its approach to COVID vaccinations multiple times, which suggests that it would be useful for us to share the answers as widely as possible; to keep our community informed, and to invite other questions you may have.

Q: Are Library staff required to be vaccinated?

A: No, our Library staff do not fall under either state or federal vaccination mandates. Our library district is an independent junior taxing district governed by a local Board of Trustees. Trustees could choose to mandate vaccination or offer incentives but have chosen not to do so.

Why? Because 100% of the Board, staff, and volunteers are already fully vaccinated.

Each has made the decision that being vaccinated is the best way to protect themselves, their families, their work colleagues, and their community. Additionally, this choice reduces risk for the library district. It better protects our assets—our staff—and helps ensure continuity of operations, with less possibility of multiple staff needing to quarantine or require medical attention should an outbreak occur.

Q: Does the library district require proof of vaccination to enter the Library or Bookmobile?

A: No, the library district does not ask for proof of vaccination status to use our facilities. Local and regional mandates requiring proof of vaccination are designed for those businesses where patrons take off their masks to eat, exercise, etc. It does not apply to library facilities, where staff and patrons are fully masked and socially distanced while indoors.

Library staff are dedicated to combatting misinformation, disinformation, and other “fake news” by applying their years of training in media and information literacies. In libraries, it is not “trust, but verify” – it’s “verify, then trust.” The fact that all of the library district’s staff, volunteers, and Trustees have placed their trust in vaccines, masks, and social distancing is a strong endorsement.

Public libraries are founded on the principles of freedom of speech, the right to privacy, and equitable access. Maintaining that focus during a public health crisis has been challenging, but we believe the district has achieved a balance that respects personal freedoms while providing services that meet our community’s public health needs in the safest manner possible. We encourage you to continue asking our library staff questions – as author Neil Gaiman noted, “Google will bring you back, you know, a hundred thousand answers. A librarian will bring you back the right one.”

Stay safe and healthy,

The Jefferson County Library District Board of Trustees

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