

This past month saw a number of additional uses of the Board's Temporary COVID-19 Leave Policy. We have had a couple cases on staff and thankfully some additional negative tests. To date, there has still been no person-to-person covid transmission among staff. The management team filled in when no subs were available, but Quincy and Sherwood branches were both closed for a couple of hours when we were unable to get staff there to cover things.

On Tuesday, February 15, I announced to staff that, based on our local covid status and our staff vaccination and natural immunity rates, we would be dropping our staff masking requirement. The next day, MDHHS basically agreed with me for the whole state. So, next week our signage and messaging will change from recommending masking in general, to asking those who are unwell to stay away or wear a mask to protect others if they must come in the library. Curbside services will remain an option for everyone, and obviously anyone may continue wearing a mask if they wish.

Given the events of the last two years, it's probably safe to assume that we'll have to use the masking mitigation strategy as some point before this is all behind us, but we'll enjoy the easier breathing while we can.

Submitted by John Rucker