



Hastings Highlands Public Library

Area: Operational

Initial Policy Approval Date: August 4, 2020

Policy Title: Epidemic / Pandemic

Last Review:

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Year of next review: 2024

Purpose: To establish a protocol that will be used in the event of an epidemic/pandemic or other public health emergency.

The Hastings Highlands Public Library (HHPL) should plan for staff being unable to report to work in the event of a serious infectious disease outbreak. In addition, during any public health emergency, organizations may be required to take measures to help slow the spread of illness, such as closing by order of the municipality, county, health unit, or provincial and federal government officials. It is important to ensure that the core business activities of the library can be maintained with limited staff and reduced hours as determined by the Library board and CEO.

Section 1: Continuity of Operations Plan – Epidemic/Pandemic

This plan differs from a general emergency preparedness policy or procedure. With an emergency preparedness policy, there is an assumption that staff will return to the building or begin recovery work almost immediately after the event or crisis, such as after a fire or storm. If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow, and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for an extended time.

Section 2: Library Closure

The Hastings Highlands Public Library may temporarily close or limit services because of a public health emergency, such as an epidemic/pandemic, in the event that any of the following occur:

- 1) A mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by the Municipality of Hastings Highlands, Hastings County, the Hastings Prince Edward Health Unit, or the provincial and/or federal governments.
- 2) If a Library employee has been diagnosed with the contagion, the Library will temporarily close for a period of time determined by the health unit, provincial government, or federal government.
- 3) The Library board or the CEO deems it is necessary for health and safety reasons.
- 4) If there is insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels or to reduce the possible spread of the contagion.

Types of Library Closures:

- 1) **Complete closure** with no staff in the building at any time.
- 2) **Library closure with essential services only.** Essential library employees may be required to work from home or on site during closures to perform necessary duties, such as submitting time sheets, bill paying, building maintenance, emptying book drops, checking phone messages, etc.
- 3) **Library closure with reduced services.** Staff may:
 - i) be allowed to work inside the building, although the building is closed to the public
 - ii) be assigned to provide services to patrons in newly determined ways, such as pick-up and drop-off.

Section 3: Compensation in an Epidemic/Pandemic

Regular part-time employees who have opted to receive eleven percent (11%) on top of their regular hourly wage in lieu of benefits are not eligible to receive compensation if they contract the disease or need to self-quarantine. See section 16.08 of the Collective agreement.

Regular part-time employees who are enlisted in the benefit plan may choose to use their accrued leave or take unpaid time off to stay at home without loss of seniority. For further information, see section 14.04 of the collective agreement. Please see section 14.06 of the Collective agreement for information regarding how years of service are affected by an unpaid leave.

Section 4: Employee Absences

The HHPL Human Resources policies shall continue to be followed in the event of an epidemic/pandemic or public health emergency while the library remains operational. Pre-approved time off will be honoured unless voluntarily cancelled.

Section 5: Impact on Staff with Child Care Concerns

In the event of school and day care closures due to an epidemic/pandemic, staff with child care concerns may choose to use their accrued leave or take unpaid time off to stay at home without loss of seniority. Please see section 14.06 of the Collective agreement for information regarding how years of service are affected by an unpaid leave.

Section 6: Staff Self-isolation Protocol

Staff will self-isolate for a period of time recommended by the health unit, provincial government, or federal government in the following situations:

- 1) if they test positive for a serious infectious disease. This will require being symptom free before a return to work;
- 2) if someone they cohabitate with tests positive for the serious infectious disease;
- 3) if someone they work with tests positive for the serious infectious disease;
- 4) or, if they are exposed to someone confirmed to have the serious infectious disease.

Section 7: Communication to Patrons

In the event of cancellation of services, programs, meeting room usage, or library closures, library staff at the direction of the CEO will:

- 1) Notify staff, Board members, custodial staff, and the public via email, social media, and the HHPL website.
- 2) Call or email scheduled program presenters, program room reservation holders, and program attendees.
- 3) Provide information regarding the epidemic/pandemic on the Library's website homepage.
- 4) Create and hang signage for informing patrons inside the Library and outside of the building.
- 5) Notify local media and other government entities as deemed necessary by the Board and CEO.

Section 8: Overdue Fines and Book Return

In the event of closure, overdue fines will be suspended. The exterior book drop may be closed or kept open and cleared periodically. For procedures on handling of returned materials, please refer to the document, 'Return Procedures for Staff'.

Section 9: Physical Distancing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

If recommended by local, provincial, or federal health officials, library staff and patrons will follow suggestions and directions to implement physical distancing within the library building. PPE and hand sanitizer will be provided by the library should it be deemed necessary for employees and/or patrons to wear such equipment while in the library during closure or upon reopening.

Section 10: Additional Cleaning Measures

Once the Library reopens after the epidemic/pandemic, the Library board and CEO will consult with the Municipality of Hastings Highlands regarding additional cleaning. New cleaning procedures will be required to ensure cleanliness of such things as bathrooms, door knobs, telephones, keyboards, counters, and work stations.

If the Library is closed due to a staff member being exposed to or contracting the virus, the cleaning contractor needs to follow the recommended procedures for thoroughly cleaning the facility.

Section 11: Responsibility for Library Operations

The CEO will manage the critical needs of the facility if the Library is closed for an extended time. If, for any reason, the CEO is unavailable to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this policy, administrative authority for this policy and all library operations shall be assumed by the Library board chair in conjunction with the Library board.

Section 12: Signage

Signs with the following information should be posted in the library:

- 1) Please use the hand sanitizer provided and wear a mask when you enter the Library.
- 2) Please remember to follow physical distancing guidelines.
- 3) Please touch only those items that you plan to sign out.
- 4) Out of respect for others who want to use the Library, please obtain the materials that you would like in a timely manner.
- 5) Computers are for business use only at this time.

Section 13: Patron Protocol

- 1) Patrons will be encouraged to continue using the dropbox for returns.
- 2) A sanitization station with hand sanitizer, Kleenex, and disposable masks (we should encourage patrons to bring their own masks in the future) will be set up at the inside library entrance, which will be supervised by a staff member.

- 3) Patrons will be asked for their names and phone numbers upon entry, and the information will be kept in a log book. They will also be asked for their general purpose for coming to the library in order to assist staff and directing them to the appropriate area.
- 4) A limit to the number of people who can be in the Library at one time will be established. The capacity limits are to be determined by government regulations and the Library Board. This limit will continually be reviewed and adjusted according to the severity of the epidemic/pandemic, government regulations, and the demands placed on staff members.
- 5) A limit to the amount of time a patron can spend in the library may need to be established depending upon the number of patrons wanting to use the Library. Time limits on computer use will be determined according to the patron's needs and the demand for use.
- 6) There will be a designated phone that patrons can ask to use for emergency purposes. This phone will be wiped down before and after use.

Section 14: Mask Usage

- 1) Patrons are required to wear face masks in the library. Some patrons may be unable to wear masks due to various reasons. Library staff are not able to ask about the medical history of patrons. The exemptions to this requirement are listed below:
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 - a) Children under two years of age, or children under the age of five years either chronologically or developmentally who refuse to wear a mask and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver;
 - b) Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask, including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties;
 - c) Individuals who are unable to apply or remove a mask without assistance, including those who are accommodated under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) or who have protections under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended;
 - d) An employee working in an area of the library that is not designated for public access or working within or behind a physical barrier (e.g., plexiglass).
- 2) If patrons are unable to wear a mask, they would be asked to sit at a dedicated work station to allow for the extra cleaning that would be necessary.

Section 15: Children in the Library

To ensure safe practices, individuals under the age of 16 need to be accompanied by an adult at all times. One adult needs to be with one child at all times. School-age individuals who require the computers for school work can make appointments ahead of time with staff.

Section 16: Patron use of Computers

The computers should be properly spaced and in view of the main desk, with each one assigned a number. A record of the number of computer a patron uses will be added to the log book, as well as the time the patron started. When the patron leaves, a staff member will sanitize the computer screen, the keyboard, and the chair. Computers should be used for business purposes only, not for entertainment.

Section 17: Time Period for use of the Epidemic/Pandemic policy

The time period that the measures in this Epidemic/Pandemic policy will be in place will be determined by regulations put in place by provincial or federal governments, health units, and the Hastings Highlands Municipality.