

# HENDRICK HUDSON FREE LIBRARY PANDEMIC, EPIDEMIC, PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN, AND/OR PUBLIC INFECTION CONCERN RESPONSE PLAN

## I: Purpose

This protocol is created to provide guidance in the event of a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or similar public infection concern, for either limiting or closing Library services as well as re-establishing Library services.

If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, the Library must plan for the safety of staff and public, and for staff being unable to report to work. During a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern, the Library may be required to take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness including:

- Closing down;
- Limiting or canceling programs and social and public gatherings
- Requiring quarantines and/or other social distancing measures
- Requiring staff and public to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)

Recovery from a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or other physical crises. Consistent with acknowledging that the safety of the public and our staff are of paramount importance, it is important to ensure that core business activities of the Library be maintained to the extent advisable, albeit with limited staff and reduced hours.

## II: Definitions

*“Pandemic.”* A disease epidemic occurs when there are more cases of that disease than normal. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic of a disease and may occur when a new virus appears against which the human population has no immunity (Sources: World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int> and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov>)

## III: Library Operations

**Continuity of Services:** The Library seeks a balanced, responsible approach to operations informed by the best and latest science and public health guidance available. There are obvious risks in failing to prepare for and respond adequately to the threat presented by a community health emergency. The Library will consider costs and benefits to residents and staff of all proposed changes to procedure. The Library will maintain services to the greatest extent possible while simultaneously

working to provide safe facilities and cooperating with government agencies and public health authorities.

**Public Health Measures:** The Library is committed to providing safe and sanitary facilities for the public and for Library staff. Based on recommendations from Westchester County, the State of New York's Division of Library Development, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), or other public health authorities, the Library may decide to implement specific procedures with regard to cleaning, sanitizing, posting signage and hygiene requirements. We encourage staff and visitors to follow the CDC guidelines which aim to slow the spread of germs.

**Temporary Reduction or Suspension of Services and Programs:** During the course of a pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern, public health authorities may advise that libraries minimize or entirely suspend situations where numerous individuals would ordinarily congregate in relatively confined spaces. In such cases the Director may decide to discontinue temporarily Library programs and use of Library meeting rooms and other areas of the building.

**Temporary Library Building Closure:** Hendrick Hudson Free Library's building will close due to pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern in the event that a mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by public health or government officials on a county or state level.

At the discretion of the Library Director and Library Board President, the Hendrick Hudson Free Library may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily in the event that:

- There is not sufficient staff to maintain basic Library service levels
- Any other condition exists which prevents the Library from operating safely and effectively

#### **IV. Impacts on Operations and Services**

The Library provides crucial resources and services to residents. The Library will strive to minimize negative impacts on access to resources and services resulting from procedures adopted in response to pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern.

**Access to Information:** The Library will work to preserve access to all of its materials, programs and services as effectively as possible while maintaining the health and safety of staff and the public and adhering to any mandates. The Library

will maintain access to its Internet site, subscription databases, digital content, and online catalog. In the event the Library building is unavailable for an extended period, the Library will invest more of its materials budget in digital collections. The Library may choose to suspend inter-library loans from the Westchester Library System.

**Access to Computers in the Library:** Many residents lack home computers or online access and rely on the public Library to provide free Internet access. While the Library remains open, we will strive to maintain public Internet access insofar as it is possible to do so safely. In coordination with health authorities the Library will consider alternatives to suspension of public computing, depending on emerging conditions. When access to the building is restricted, we will work to provide wifi service that is accessible outside of the building for public use. We will also make available, to the extent possible, electronic devices for lending to cardholders.

**Suspension of Due Dates and Fines:** In the event of a temporary closure of the Library, the Library will extend or suspend all due dates, and suspend all late fees. The Library will also encourage the public to keep borrowed items in their homes until further notice.

**Material Handling:** The Library will minimize the handling of Library materials by staff. All materials will be returned through the book drop. Returned materials may be quarantined for up to 72 hours before such items are checked in and re-shelved. The Library may no longer accept cash; payments can be made by credit card.

## **V: Staffing**

An inability to maintain the minimum level of staff required to properly operate will result in reduced hours, or closing the Library. The absentee level of Library staff will determine the ability to carry out services and maintain open hours.

## **VI: Communication**

In the event of closure necessitated by pandemic, epidemic, public health concern, and/or public infection concern, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours is of the utmost importance. To publicize any such changes the Library will use its website, telephone voice system, social media, Library e-mail distribution lists, and work with local media. Patrons are encouraged to sign up for email communications by joining our mailing list via our website home page at [www.henudfreelibrary.org](http://www.henudfreelibrary.org).