

Date: October 20, 2021
From: Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian
To: Library Board
Subject: HPL COVID-19 Response Update Report

COVID-19 VACCINATION VERIFICATION POLICY

We are pleased to report on the status of our Vaccine Verification Policy. Thank you to all Board members for confirming your vaccination status, we have 100% compliance with the Library Board members. Staff compliance has also been excellent, exceeding 90%. Staff are currently working with the small number of staff that have not yet provided proof of double vaccination. We will keep the Board posted as we continue to follow through on the implementation of this policy.

SUPPORTING THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Since the last meeting staff continue to work on supporting the vaccine roll-out. Major developments include:

Getting Vaccine Proof Printed and Laminated

After the province announced the vaccine proof system HPL was approached by the City to see how we could help residents get their vaccine proof. In response we offered to print and laminate the vaccine proof at all our locations. The City installed special phones that connect directly to public health staff so HPL could ensure residents were able to access and print their vaccination proof. After printing the proof staff have been laminating it for those that request it. The popularity of this has exceeded expectations. Between Tuesday, September 21 and Friday, September 24 staff laminated 11,669 vaccination proofs. Demand for the service continues, although at a more manageable pace. At the time of writing this report since the program started, we have laminated more than 26,200.

Public Health Vaccination Clinics at HPL Locations

We have been making it a high priority to accommodate Public Health run vaccination clinics in our spaces. Since September 11 HPL has hosted over 20 clinics in different parts of the City. Generally, the program has been very successful with over 1,000 people vaccinated at HPL. We look forward to continuing to work with Public Health to help ensure people can get vaccinated. The response has been very positive.

UPDATE ON LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS

System-wide service hours were expanded on October 4 and are listed in the table below. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is currently working with the Management Team to map out potential Library Service Hours to for the Library Board to consider. The plan is to propose a new Library Service Hours policy that articulates the main criteria for deciding Library Hours and provides a new base of service hours system-wide that would be moved to as soon as we can.

With all the vacancies we currently have, and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the goal is to ensure we have a sustainable level of staffing to meet each location's needs. This process requires careful consideration. The importance of doing this now is with all the vacancies that exist in the system currently, we have a rare opportunity to rebalance staffing levels in a significantly less disruptive way than trying to shuffle positions that are already filled.

LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 4, 2021

| Category | Location | Hours of Operation |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| LARGE LOCATIONS | AN, CE, DU, FD, RH, TE, TP, WA | MON – THURS 9 – 7 FRI 9 – 6, SAT 9 - 5 |
| PRIORITY LOCATIONS | BA, CN, PA | MON – THURS 9 – 7 FRI 9 – 6, SAT 9 - 5 |
| MIDSIZED LOCATIONS | BI, KE, SA, SH, WE | ACCOMMODATION FOR UNMASKED 9 – 10 TUES – FRI 10 – 6, SAT 10 - 5 |
| SMALL LOCATIONS | LO, ST, VP | TUES – FRI 10 – 6, SAT 10 - 5 |
| RURAL | CA, MH | TUES – FRI 1 – 6, SAT 1 - 5 |
| RURAL EXTENDED ACCESS | FR, GR, LY | MON - THURS 9 - 7, FRI 9 - 6, SAT 9 – 5 * STAFFED 4/5 HOURS DAILY, EA WITH SECURITY STAFF REMAINING HOURS WHILE MASK MANDATES REMAIN IN EFFECT |

Proposed Next Steps

Staff will continue to analyse Library Service Hours capacity. At the November and December meetings the draft policy will be brought to the Library Board, along with potential service hours schedule. It will be up to the Library Board to decide how the hours are divided up but we need to make sure we have a clear idea of staff capacity, so we do not present the Board with a service hours schedule that is unsustainable given our current funding. Once the target hours and policy are approved, we will work towards implementation.

While the longer-term planning process continues, staff will be looking at enhancements to the existing service provision that we could implement before the end of the year. The recent volume of work generated by vaccine printing and lamination has required an all-hands-on-deck approach for the last couple weeks. We will continue to strive to provide as much service as we safely and sustainably can.

Update on Staff Capacity

The process of filling vacant positions has commenced. It is important that we do this correctly and recruit the best individuals for the available positions. For all Unionized positions, we are required to see if any internal candidates qualify before we post externally. We anticipate that there will be a lot of opportunities for existing HPL staff to gain advancement within the

organization. This is a positive thing, but it will likely mean existing staff move to new positions that they qualify for before external candidates expand our overall staffing numbers.

CURRENT PUBLIC SAFETY MEASURES

A reminder that we are still currently paused at Step 3 of the Ontario Reopening plan. This table summarizes the current measures we have in place.

| MEASURES | CURRENT STATE |
|---|--|
| MASK & FACE COVERINGS | HPL continues to adhere to the mask mandate for both staff and members. Library Members are provided disposable medical masks upon entry (if not wearing a face covering). Face shields or eye protection are also required when staff cannot maintain physical distancing with exempt Members not wearing a face covering. |
| CAPACITY OF OUR SPACES & PHYSICAL DISTANCING | We continue to apply stricter restrictions on capacity of people in our spaces than the regulations permit. This enables us to both support physical distancing in our spaces and reduces the likelihood of exposure to COVID-19 through airborne transmission. In the summer we began the process of gradually increasing the capacity numbers based on the local state of the pandemic. We are also monitoring visits to ensure our capacity limits are not creating unnecessary barriers to service. Exceeding capacity has generally not been an issue during the pandemic; however, we will continue to monitor it. |
| HVAC ENHANCEMENTS & IMPROVED AIRFLOW | City of Hamilton Facilities Division installed new high-grade (MERV 13) filters and increased flow in all HPL HVAC systems. During the pandemic, locations are temporarily closed if a HVAC system is not functional. |
| ENHANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTING | Although current evidence points to much lower risk of surface spread of COVID-19 than was originally thought, we continue to follow enhanced cleaning of high touch surface areas to adhere to City of Hamilton standards. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the system for Members and staff. |
| REMOTE WORK | HPL continues to support remote work as appropriate. Supporting library operations requires many staff to be present in our spaces, so working from home is not an option for many. |
| PROGRAMS | Limited online and partner led. No in-person group events. |

Additional Notes about Safety Protocols & Services

- **Alternate for Exempt Individuals** – Face coverings are required in the Library. Exempt individuals are required to wear a face shield as an alternative. All locations have face shields to loan or give to individuals who require them. Members are provided a face shield to keep and reuse when the situation warrants. If a vision issue is disclosed, staff help the person navigate the branch verbally and guide the Member, while maintaining physical distancing. HPL offers bookable appointments between 9-10 am at four locations for members who can not wear a mask or a shield.
- **Additional Accommodations** – HPL works with partners serving vulnerable individuals and Library Members in need of supports. In 2021, HPL launched a pilot project to offer a limited number of individuals alternative accommodation by providing a mobile-connected device for a 21-day loan period.

INTENTIONAL RESTART TO IN-PERSON PROGRAMS IN 2022

As staff work through the implementation of the new ***Working with Us Policy*** (*Policy on Programs, Partnership and Space Usage*)ⁱ we are following an intentional and gradual restart of in-person events and programs in 2022. We will be reporting back to the Library Board later in 2021 about our plans, but here are our initial thoughts about how that should work:

- We will be more focused on outcome-based programs and ensuring we better understand the impacts we are working towards
- We will be looking at our program schedule through an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework and applying Universal Design Principles, so we are not creating barriers to participation. One of our most important strengths is our ability to work with people of different ages, cultural and economic backgrounds – our application of an EDI Framework needs to be about enhancing mutual understanding, respect and empathy. We are in a unique position to be able to do this in such a broad and impactful way with community partners and the *Working with Us Policy*.

ⁱ <https://hpl.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=1067&MeetingID=95>