

# Hamilton Public Library Pandemic Service Continuity Plan

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*Last Updated March 13, 2020*

**Note:** After the 2003 SARS outbreak, HPL developed a comprehensive Pandemic Plan. The Plan was developed to ensure HPL has a robust system in place to respond to quickly to changing circumstances. This plan is reviewed and updated annually. The plan has two parts: this document (which is the system plan) and a detailed plan for each Library department. The Plan’s response Levels are intended to help envision different scenarios that will require response and action. The Plan informs decisions, but we give higher priority to directions from Public Health, the City of Hamilton and the best available informed advice based on actual circumstances.

We are publishing the system Plan on our website because other libraries have requested to review it. We hope it is helpful and encourage other libraries to adapt any elements of it that they find useful.

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## Section 1: Scope

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### Introduction

This plan is to provide direction to the Hamilton Public Library for an organized and coordinated approach to a pandemic or a threat of a pandemic in the City of Hamilton.

HPL's overriding concern during a pandemic is helping protect the public and staff from coming to harm. To do this we will make it a high priority to support public health and emergency management efforts. We will be proactive about ensuring our employees and the public are informed with **accurate, up-to-date** and **reliable** information about:

- The risks of a pandemic
- Steps to reduce the risk of exposure
- Steps to take if you or someone you know becomes ill
- Other information about planning for and coping with a pandemic

The Library has a robust Pandemic Plan and we will work closely with Public Health and other authorities to make decisions based on the best information available from public health authorities. Throughout a pandemic we will adapt our services as needed and work to minimize the impact of inaccurate information. We will work to minimize unnecessary fear and division in the communities we serve.

The aim of this Plan is to provide direction to Hamilton Public Library for the efficient communication, coordination, support, and implementation of the actions to be taken by staff during a pandemic in the City of Hamilton. **During an actual crisis this plan will provide guidance to help inform decision-making, however, actual challenges, circumstances and directions given by Public Health and the City of Hamilton will take priority.**

The plan is separate from the City of Hamilton but will be impacted by the City of Hamilton's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The Chief Librarian is responsible for the liaison with the City of Hamilton and will be a member of the City COOP.

The development and implementation of this plan is informed by the Vision and Values of the Hamilton Public Library Board, by our respect for staff and our customers and imperative to protect the privacy of personal information. Our policies on service delivery and Human Resources govern the application of the Hamilton Public Library Pandemic Plan.

### ACTIVATION & ACTIVATING AUTHORITY OF THE HPL PANDEMIC PLAN

Hamilton Public Library staff must be prepared to respond to any phase of a pandemic in which the potential exists for adverse health effects on the public. The decision to implement the Hamilton Public Library Pandemic Plan may be activated by the Chief Librarian or Designate. The decision to activate the plan may also be based on the activation of the City of Hamilton Continuity of Operations Plan.

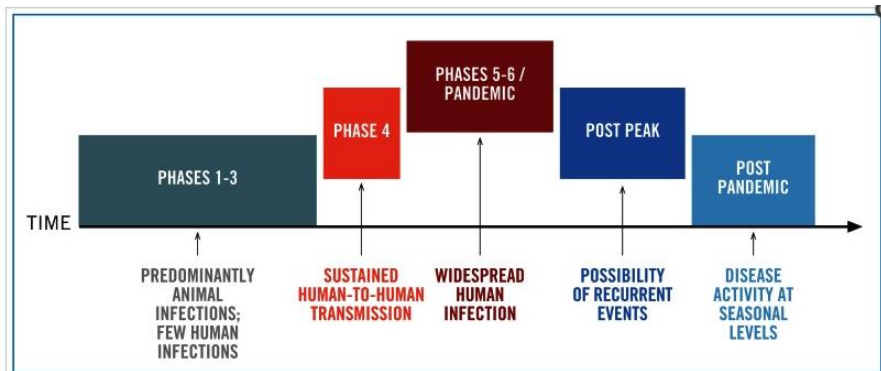
### DEFINITION OF A PANDEMIC AND PANDEMIC PHASES

Pandemic refers to the occurrence of a new strain of influenza or other novel disease that circulates worldwide. The new strain will not have been previously seen in humans and so there will be no past immunity to provide protection. Past pandemic influenza has resulted in significant hospitalizations and deaths.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has outlined the phases of pandemic activity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK143061/>

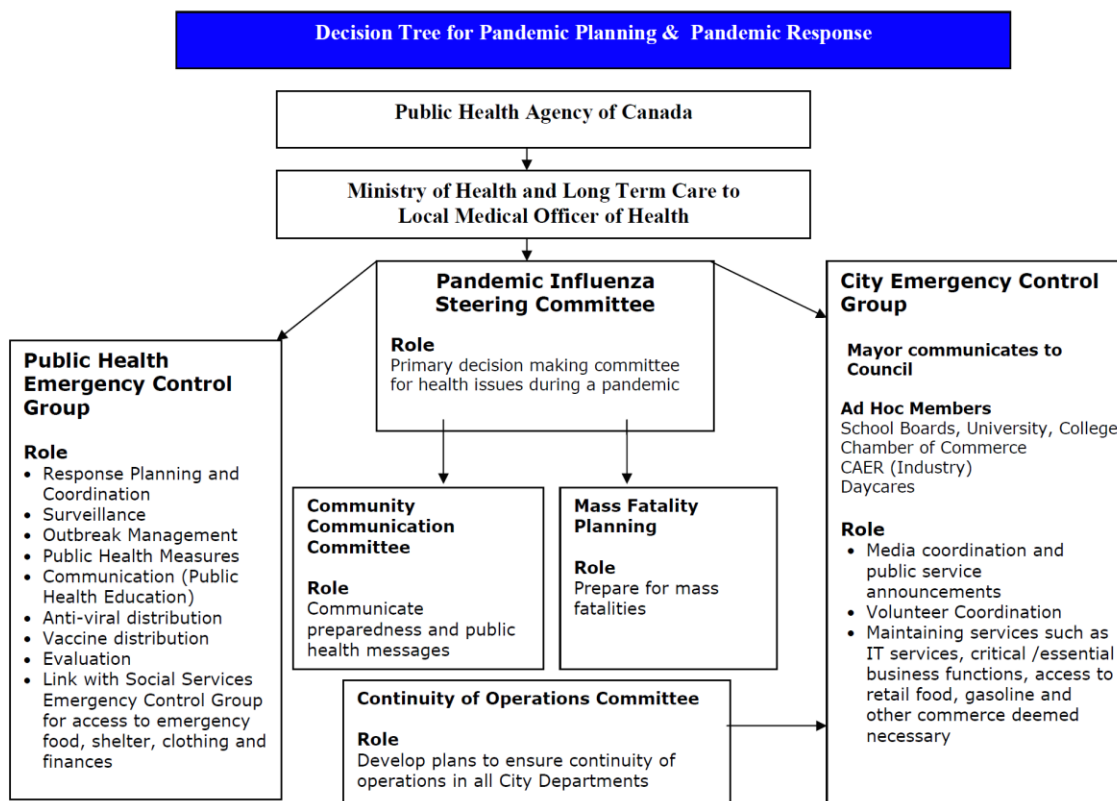


Model detailed description of the phases and WHO actions for each phase is available online<sup>2</sup>:

## City of Hamilton – Pandemic Influenza Plan

The City of Hamilton has a **Pandemic Influenza Plan**<sup>3</sup> that was developed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. The City’s plan calls for the creation of several special teams to coordinate different aspects of a pandemic. One of the teams created is called the **Continuity of Operations Committee (COOP)**. The Chief Librarian/CEO or representative is a member of that team. During a pandemic it will be critical that HPL supports the City of Hamilton and the Province of Ontario in supporting their efforts and plans. HPL will use our infrastructure and reach in many parts of Hamilton to support public health and safety.

**Table 1: City of Hamilton Decision Tree**



<sup>2</sup> [https://www.who.int/influenza/resources/documents/pandemic\\_phase\\_descriptions\\_and\\_actions.pdf](https://www.who.int/influenza/resources/documents/pandemic_phase_descriptions_and_actions.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/7D8FC70C-36ED-4308-BB5A-6220E9049429/0/Feb26BOH07009PandemicPlan.pdf>

## **Section 2: Emergency Notification Procedure**

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### **Emergency Response (ER) Team**

The following are members of the Emergency Response Team within the Hamilton Public Library. Other individuals may be appointed by the Chief Librarian/CEO or designate.

Chief Librarian/CEO  
Director Digital Technology and Creation  
Director Human Resources  
Director Finance and Facilities  
Director Public Service – Branches  
Director Program Development and Collections  
Manager Digital Technology Infrastructure  
Manager Digital Technology Services  
Manager Communications  
Manager Facilities  
Branch Manager  
Human Resources Coordinator – Recruitment  
Human Resources Coordinator – Health & Safety

### **Activation of the ER Team**

In a pandemic the Emergency Response Team will be activated by:

- The Chief Librarian/CEO activates the ER TEAM when the risk of a pandemic is deemed significant.
- The Province issues a pandemic alert.
- The City of Hamilton issues pandemic alert.

The emergency contact list will be used to contact the ER Team during or after hours. The process will be initiated by the Director of HR, Chief Librarian or designate.

### **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION AND ACTIVATION LEVELS**

The threat of a pandemic or the potential for the pandemic to develop in severity may require different levels of emergency notification and activation. The Chief Librarian/CEO or designate lead for the team will decide on the level of activation based on the severity of the threat. Normal system notification procedures will be followed.

### **MEETING LOCATION**

The Emergency Response Team will meet in the Central Library Board Room. The alternate site will be the Terryberry Branch (or an alternative determined by the Emergency Pandemic Response Team). In case all or a few of the members of the ER Team cannot meet in person, a virtual meeting capability will be established through a video/audio conference link.

## Section 3: Service Delivery Plan

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### Pandemic Levels 1-5

This plan will be implemented in Levels. There are five (5) Levels in this plan. Level 1 is precautionary and may be activated by the Chief Librarian/CEO in the event that there is a reasonable probability that a pandemic may occur in the coming months. In Level 2 service disruptions are starting to happen. Level 3 sees escalating disruptions and in Level 4 all physical Library locations are closed.

There are a couple essential points about the Levels:

- Throughout all stages, HPL needs to play an important role in disseminating reliable and useful information.
- If access to physical locations or our ability to circulate physical materials become constrained, we will put additional resources into our digital offerings to meet demand.

### Decision Making Authority about Service Reductions

These Levels and Service Strategies are meant as guidelines. During all levels the **Emergency Response (ER) Team** will be responsible for approving and communicating service reductions to staff, customers and key stakeholders. The ER Team will ensure local managers and staff are consulted about decisions when practical.

It is likely that if the pandemic reaches Level 3, the City COOP will direct HPL to cancel any large gatherings of people (programs) and to close locations or reduce hours. Library staff may also be seconded to other emergency functions by the COH. If an actual Pandemic Emergency is called locally, our ability to make decisions could be severely restrained.

A prolonged quarantine could create increased demand for some of our services, however, during a serious pandemic emergency our **primary concern is the health and safety of staff and the public**. Ideally, we will be a critical resource that helps keep the community together and the public informed about the pandemic.

### Communication & Responsibilities All Levels

#### LOCAL STAFF, MANAGERS

When staff shortages or other problems are creating problems or potential problems with providing service or access to facilities:

- Promptly notify your Director and the ER Team. If possible, suggest mitigation strategies that reduces negative impact.
- Record Service Disruption Log on HPLNET.
- Follow Branch closure checklist if needed.

#### EMERGENCY RESPONSE (ER) TEAM

The ER Team will work closely with the Manager of Communications and Digital Technology Services to ensure instructions to staff and notification of service disruptions to the public are done using multiple channels, including:

- **Library website**
- **HPLnet** – staff Intranet
- **Staff Information Line** – 905-546-3200, x7500 (instructions for staff)
- **Media**
- **HPL social media**

The ER Team will also ensure there is effective communication and consultation with:

- Library Board and Ward Councillors
- City of Hamilton COOP Team
- Library partners

## Level 1: Precautionary

The first level is precautionary and may be activated by the Chief Librarian/CEO if there is a reasonable probability that a pandemic may occur in the coming months. At this point it is not clear if the other Levels of the plan will be necessary. Level 1 is primarily public and staff education and getting prepared in case a pandemic materializes.

### **ACTIONS TAKEN STARTING AT LEVEL 1**

- Review and update the Plan
- Communicating to staff and public. Provide staff with an overview of the Pandemic Plan, the Levels, and preparation taking place.
- Ensure sanitary procedures in place.
- Establish and follow heightened cleaning routines system-wide (keyboards, etc).
- Consider removing shared items such as in-house toys. (Items that can't be put in the dishwasher.)
- Order sufficient supplies, as outlined in this plan, to meet the needs during the latter stages of the Plan (i.e. hand sanitizer or wipes, etc.).
- Collect necessary information to be able to cancel programs on short notice.
- Communications Department on alert for cancellation/closure notifications.
- ER Team meets periodically to review plans, roles and responsibilities.

## Level 2: Sporadic Disruptions

If Level 2 there are starting to be sporadic disruptions due to increased absenteeism. The causes of the increased rate of absenteeism could include flu symptoms or diagnosis, however, more people may not be at work due to voluntary quarantine due to potential exposure to the virus. We always encourage people that are sick to stay home and get better, however, during a pandemic where there is local spreading in our community, we will stress that all staff and customers strictly adhere to the advice of public health official regarding what to do.

### **ACTIONS STARTING AT LEVEL 2**

- **ER Team:** The ER Team will meet on a regular basis and ensure active communication with staff and the public. The frequency of meetings will be dependent on the scale of issues being faced.
- **Cleaning:** continue enhanced cleaning, review and enhance if necessary. Monitor maintenance closely. If Maintenance staff are absent, contract services and/or staff will be reassigned to maintain cleaning standards. We will strive to provide customers with disinfectant wipes and other methods to support helping protect them when visiting HPL.
- **Social Distancing:** We will review our spaces to see how we can support social distancing by reducing the density of seating and computers. Library programs will be cancelled.
- **Collections:** Technical Services will determine if alternate delivery services are needed and will monitor outgoing delivery and hold back delivery as needed.
- **Security:** If additional security is needed, be ready to deploy additional security or staff promptly.
- **Local Disruptions:** The Local Manager must notify the Chief Librarian/CEO (or designate) of any branch closures.

## **SERVICE STRATEGIES**

**Central Library:** if several staff are absent, the Central Managers will co-ordinate staff schedules to cover as many service points as possible. Outreach, programs, tours and service points will be cancelled unless otherwise determined by the ER Team to be essential. The Local History and Archives Department and other service points may have reduced hours and staff reassigned.

**Branches:** branch will operate with minimal staff as necessary to fulfil normal operations of spaces, access to technology and circulation of materials. Outreach, programs will be cancelled unless determined otherwise. The Branch Manager is authorized to close an evening shift and reassign staff to

cover a day shift; however, if a staff person is unable to change the shift, that person will work the evening shift to empty the drop box.

**Rural branches:** one-person branches will close or reduce hours when staff are absent. Where practical other cluster staff or call-in staff will be assigned to limit closures. Extended Access rural branches may remain open; staff will be assigned to each Extended Access location for at least 2 hours a day.

**Bookmobiles:** will reduce bookmobile, as required.

### Level 3: Rotating Closures, Reduced Hours, Decreased Service

Level 3 is reached when closures are ongoing and likely increasing. The cause of closures could be increased absenteeism or orders by public health officials to close public spaces. Our goal should be to offer as much service as we can, while adhering to guidance from public health officials.

#### **ACTIONS STARTING AT LEVEL 3**

- Daily ER Team meetings and daily updates to the staff and public.
- Extension of due dates system-wide to reduce volume of materials being returned and prevent fines from accumulating.
- Extension of hold expiry dates to ensure holds (already shelved and new ones) will not expire before the public can retrieve them.
- Not running the expired hold reports.
- Adding system-wide closed days as needed to prevent fines from accumulating.
- Tele-messaging and e-messaging – messages not sent out but queued for sending after reopening.

#### **SERVICE STRATEGIES**

Spot closures across the system are expected. Ideally a branch should be closed no longer than three days, and then staff should rotate to another branch. This will continue until there are enough staff to open both branches, or the next Pandemic Level is reached. We may consider the option to work remotely to maintain some services.

The Level 3 goal is to ensure that as many locations as possible are able to provide service and when that cannot happen, closures are rotated to limit the impact on specific branches and communities. Service hour reductions are also used to balance out closures. Central Library is a priority to remain open, however, some service points may have reduced hours and the Central Library hours may be reduced.

- Bookmobiles and Visiting Library Service will be suspended.
- All remaining system-wide programming will be cancelled, except where the ER Team deems essential.
- Study halls cancelled.

#### **STAFFING DECISIONS**

The ER Team will work closely with the Union and staff to ensure staff who are able to work, are able to get to their assigned location. In an emergency, the **goal is to view resources and staffing through a system not departmental lens**. The following are potential groupings of staff that will be considered depending on circumstances.

- All departments located at the Central Library will work together to cover system-critical functions and essential service points.
- Staff will be merged to assist with balancing closures geographically:
  - Barton/Kenilworth to Red Hill
  - Stoney Creek to Saltfleet
  - Binbrook/Mt Hope to Terryberry
  - Valley Park to Sherwood



- Locke to Westdale
- LY to Ancaster (if AN not open, to DU)
- FR, CA to Waterdown (if WA not open, to WE)
- Greenville to Dundas
- Concession to Turner Park

### **LATE STAGE LEVEL 3 – CONSOLIDATING STAFF REGIONALLY**

Staff will be scheduled to report (on short notice) to designated open locations: Central, Red Hill, Turner Park, or Dundas. The safety of staff and the public and online services will be a high priority.

- The Central Library will reduce hours or close floors. The minimum service level to be maintained will be the first floor.
- BiblioCommons will be available to the public so they can check their library cards, the status of their holds, or place more holds.
- Staff may also be expected to travel to nearby closed branches to handle drop boxes.
- Collections: Selectors will cease ordering new physical materials. Technical Services will cease triggering holds and/or shipping new materials. Vendors will be contacted and will be asked to hold back new deliveries. In-house courier will be deployed as needed.

### **Level 4: Full System Closure**

Closure of system may be ordered by the Chief Medical Officer of Health or closed because of operational concerns. In Level 4 all physical locations of the Library will be closed to the public. At this stage our facilities and staff may be seconded by the City for emergency purposes. Supporting public health and emergency management efforts, including relief, will be the top priority.

### **SERVICE STRATEGIES**

All locations are closed to the public. Besides supporting emergency management efforts, the goals of Level 4 include:

- Using online tools to keep the public informed of critical information.
- Maintain online and remote services including phone, eReference to answer questions.
- Maintain library facilities and collections to enable prompt re-opening of facilities when the pandemic has passed.

### **Staffing**

Staff continue to report to work, as per Level 3. Teams will be assigned to go to closed locations to empty drop boxes. Online services may be remotely supported.

### **Level 5: Re-Opening Process**

Depending upon the length and extent of any closures during Levels 4, it will take some time before the system can fully reopen. Re-opening processes and timelines will be determined by the ER Team. Once the system is reopened and at least partially recovered, HPL will evaluate lessons learned from the pandemic. A high priority at the point of re-opening will be to help the community heal. Depending on what happened during the pandemic we may need to help our staff and community acknowledge and honour those we lost as we work to move forward.

The following re-opening processes will take place:

- Polaris: All closed days will be added to the system-wide calendar. Extended holds expiring dates and due dates will continue to be extended for up to 2 weeks after reopening to help even out workloads as the Library recovers.
- When reopened – all locations to follow normal circulation procedures with respect to CKI and CKO. Expired Holds list – will NOT be run for at least 7 days after reopening.
- Collections: Selectors recommence sending orders and Technical Services will resume processing, triggering of holds and shipping delivery to locations.



## Appendix I: Additional Information

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### AUTHORITY AND LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This plan is prepared under the authority of the Chief Librarian of the Hamilton Public Library. The 1990 Emergency Management Act is the authority under which the Premier will declare a provincial emergency during a pandemic. If an emergency is declared, Section 7(3) allows the Premier to direct and control a municipality's administration, facilities and equipment, and can direct and control municipalities' powers and duties.

With the *Order-in-Council 167/2004* (February 2, 2004), the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is responsible for formulating emergency plans for large-scale human health emergencies and epidemics, and emergency health services. The 1990 *Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)* imposes duties and responsibilities on the local Medical Officer of Health with respect to the control of health hazards and communicable diseases. Hence the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Hamilton has legislative authority to take local measures to control an infectious disease outbreak.

### CITY OF HAMILTON ASSUMPTIONS

The Hamilton Public Library Plan follows similar assumptions as those of the City and Province. Those assumptions include:

- The rate of infection of a pandemic and the length of the cycles may vary greatly over time and last several months.
  - The rate of infection, absenteeism, reduction of services will increase over time allowing for an escalated response.
  - Absenteeism across the corporation may exceed 50% at its peak.
  - Some business units may suffer greater absenteeism than other units.
  - Most non-essential services may be cancelled at various times in response to labour availability.
- Many low and medium level essential services may be cancelled, or deliveries modified at various times in response to labour availability.

### DOCUMENT LOCATION

The Master Plan will reside with the office of the Chief Librarian and a copy on HPLnet accessible to all staff. During a crisis the goal will be to share as much information as possible with all staff and customers.