

Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library  
Milton, NY

**PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION**

New York State requires libraries to develop a pandemic response policy, so that we might be prepared for future pandemics – beyond the current COVID-19 crisis. The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library's several COVID-specific policies still stand for the COVID pandemic. This policy will, it is hoped, mobilize a quick and flexible response to future pandemics challenging our community.

The library staff and board members are neither public health nor public policy experts. Therefore, the scope of this policy is to outline how decisions might best be made during a pandemic, with full acknowledgment that we cannot know the future: what the cause of the pandemic might be, the vectors that might spread it, the rate of infection and who is most likely to be affected, possible treatment or mitigation, symptoms and duration of illness, the development and distribution of a vaccine, etc.

However, we trust that there will be experts who will outline the best course of action – namely, The Centers for Disease Control and the New York State and Ulster County Departments of Health. In the event of a pandemic, in order to keep our staff and patrons healthy, the library will follow the directives of these institutions. In the case of governmental guidelines leaving a lack of clarity or broad latitude of choice, the Mid-Hudson Library System staff have been invaluable in the past in helping to interpret ambiguous directives and to plot sensible courses of actions.

Some lessons the COVID-19 pandemic continues to teach us are that the library cannot respond to internet speculations, unvetted studies, or pandemic denials – which can arise on an hourly basis. In order to move forward through the pandemic, the library must follow a sensible plan set forth by the board and director – knowing full well that the course of the pandemic will develop day-by-day and governmental orders for closure or modified reopening will change along with the challenges.

In the case of a future pandemic, the library will:

1. Follow the lawful instructions of government public health officials and local first responders.
2. Keep abreast of developments through the efforts of the library director and president of the board of trustees, who in turn will keep staff and board members informed.
3. Assemble the library board for a conversation of next steps, to be summarized in plans pertaining to the specific pandemic.
4. The library director will be called on to be the pandemic coordinator for the staff and will be permitted to change procedures to comply with governmental guidelines after conversation with the board president. Full board meetings will not be needed to be held to change policy to comply with new executive orders or CDC guidelines. For instance, the time period for quarantining after exposure might change as new information comes to light. (It was 14 days at the beginning of COVID-19, and now CDC calls for 10 days, only.)

5. Library staff, patrons and all who enter the building will be required to conform to health safety protocols (whatever they happen to be for the particular illness).
6. Library services will be offered to patrons in a manner that is equitable and safe (like contact-free curbside service and on-line programming).
7. Community members' tax contribution to the library will receive the same excellent stewardship as always, with laying off or furloughing staff being an action of last resort.

## PURPOSE

The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library has adopted this Pandemic Response Plan in compliance with New York State Labor Law §27-c to implement operational plans in the event of certain declared public health emergencies including, but not limited to, novel coronavirus (COVID-19) or other communicable disease or pandemic illness.

The primary goals of the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library's Pandemic Response Plan are to establish:

- The roles and responsibilities during all phases of a public health emergency
- Preparedness activities and response protocols
- Coordination and decision making for the continuation of operation

The Pandemic Response Plan is designed to ensure precautionary, response, and recovery measures to a public health emergency involving a communicable disease threatening to impact or immediately impacting the library's staff, trustees, volunteers, and/or community members.

## ADMINISTRATION

The Library Director as authorized by the Board of Trustees administers the Pandemic Response Plan. This includes activating the plan, establishing an internal communications network, and coordinating all response and recovery activities. It is advised that the Director stays in close contact with the President of the Board of Trustees in this capacity. If, for any reason, the Director is unable or unavailable to administer the plan, administrative authority shall be passed to the Library Office Manager in tandem with the President of the Board of Trustees. Any changes to this plan that need to be made swiftly and immediately will be made by the Director and President.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms are hereby defined for the purposes of this policy:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Equipment worn to minimize exposure to communicable disease or pandemic illness as mandated by local, state, or federal law and/or any Executive Orders related to the public health emergency or mandates issued by federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- **Employee:** Any person employed by the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library regardless of job classification or title.
- **Contractor:** Any individual performing paid services for the library but not an employee of the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library.
- **Essential:** Designation made to an employee or contractor whose duties require them to be physically present at the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library to perform their job, OR tasks that are vital or necessary to the safety or operational needs of the library.

- **Non-essential:** Designation made to an employee whose duties do not require them to be physically present at the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library, OR tasks that are not vital or necessary to the safety or operational needs of the library.
- **Communicable disease:** Illness caused by an infectious agent that occurs through the direct or indirect transmission of the infectious agent or its byproducts or via inanimate environment or object to a susceptible person or persons.
- **Retaliatory Action:** The discharge, suspension, demotion, penalization, discrimination, or other adverse employment action taken against any employee.

## **ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES OR DUTIES**

In the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce, the library Director shall be designated as an Essential Employee and be permitted to be physically present at the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library to perform tasks essential to their job or the operations of the library including, but not limited to, maintenance to the facilities that could otherwise threaten or pose a risk to the library's facilities if not performed; bookkeeping such as accounts payable, accounts receiving, and processing payroll; and/or accepting, sorting, and opening postal mail or packages.

These essential tasks may be delegated to a specific employee or contractor at the discretion of the Director. This employee or contractor is permitted to be physically present at the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library to perform only the designated essential tasks as assigned.

## **TELECOMMUTE/WORK FROM HOME**

In the event of a state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce, the staff members whose tasks can be completed from home will telecommute. Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library will provide library equipment and software as necessary to perform those duties and tasks.

## **IN-PERSON REPORTING**

The Director will coordinate the schedule for employees and contractors reporting to the library in-person to perform essential tasks so that the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library remains in compliance with the state-ordered reduction of in-person workforce. No employee or contractor is permitted to report to the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library without authorization from the Director.

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

PPE as required by local, state, or federal laws or Executive Orders will be provided by the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library. As per OSHA guidelines, employees are not financially responsible for mandated PPE. Employees may provide their own PPE if they desire and if it is in compliance with all local, state, or federal laws or Executive Orders and CDC and OSHA regulations.

The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library will provide any necessary training for mandated PPE including proper use and disposal.

The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library will keep a supply of basic PPE in storage in the event a public health emergency is immediately declared. All employees will be aware of the storage location of PPE. The Director replenish the supply as needed.

## **EXPOSURE TO COMMUNICABLE DISEASE**

If required by local, state, or federal laws or Executive Orders, mandatory, continuous health screening practices will be implemented for all employees.

In the event an employee is exposed to a known case of the communicable disease that is the subject of the public health emergency, exhibits symptoms of such disease, or tests positive for such disease, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

- The employee must not report to the library or they must leave the premises immediately, if already at work, and notify the Director.
- The Director will follow protocol to inform the Ulster County Health Department, and then the New York State Health Department (if Ulster County is not in communication with them). The procedure will conform to the guidance specific to workplaces with a suspected or positive case.
- The Director and the employee will determine which other staff members were in close contact and possibly exposed to the communicable disease.
- The Director and the employee will determine which areas of the library are now considered "contaminated" and need to be immediately closed.

### **Cleaning Contaminated Areas**

- The library will immediately close off contaminated area(s).
- The area(s) will be quarantined for a length of time determined by local or state health departments.
- [FANS/HVAC SYSTEM] will be temporarily turned off the area so that particles will not circulate throughout the facility.
- After the determined length of time, the area(s) used by the employee will be cleaned, vacuumed, and disinfected including office space, cubicles, storage room, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like computers, tablets, keyboards, and other office supplies.
- The area(s) will be cleaned by the library's contracted cleaning crew, wearing appropriate PPE.
- Once the area(s) has (have) been appropriately disinfected, it (they) can be opened for use.
- The library will continue routine cleaning and disinfecting and logging these activities as recommended.

### **Contact Tracing**

The Director will adhere to local and state guidance regarding Contact Tracing which may include reporting or contacting other employees, contractors, visitors, and patrons who voluntarily supplied their information for the purpose of Contact Tracing who may have been in close contact with the employee suspected or confirmed to have the communicable disease. The Director will keep the health status of employees confidential.

### **Compensation**

The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library will adhere to all local, state, or federal laws or Executive Orders regarding sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to this communicable disease.

## **Returning to Work**

- If an employee is exposed to the communicable disease or exhibits symptoms of the communicable disease, they must follow all local and state health department directives which may include being tested for that communicable disease and/or quarantining for a specified amount of time at home.
- If an employee has a suspected or confirmed case they must not report back to work until they have met all of the following criteria in consultation with a healthcare provider and in accordance with local, state, and/or federal criteria specific to the communicable disease.
- All other employees will be provided instructions for returning to work dependent on the determination of risk of exposure by the local or state health department during Contact Tracing.

## **Mitigating Risk**

Reporting to work following a known exposure to the communicable disease, having symptoms consistent with the communicable disease, or following a positive test without being medically cleared to return to work as defined above will be considered a violation of library policy and may result in disciplinary action.

The Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library will not take any retaliatory action for employees not reporting to work due to a suspected or confirmed case of the communicable disease. Employees must follow the established protocols outlined in the Personnel Policy for reporting an absence.

## **CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS**

In the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease, the Director will address operations according to the following outline. Some circumstances will require deviation from this sequence in order to best serve the safety and health of the library staff and community.

- Assess the emergency declaration as it relates to the library's facilities, materials, staff, or community.
- Notify the appropriate persons including employees and the Board of Trustees.
- Determine the next steps, with the information available, regarding:
  - Services or service points
  - Hours of operation
  - Personnel
- Communicate with the public about changes in services and operation.
- Document in detail the sequence or timeline of events before, during, and after the declared public health emergency.
- Prepare for recovery.

## **COMMUNICATION**


Once approved by the Board of Trustees, this Pandemic Response Plan will be published in a clear and conspicuous location at the Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library and on the library's website. A copy will be provided to all employees.

**ONGOING USE EVALUATION**

This Pandemic Response Plan was as required by law with the health and safety of the library's employees and community as the top priority.

The Pandemic Response Plan will be evaluated annually by the Director and Board of Trustees and updated as needed.

Questions or concerns regarding Sarah Hull Hallock Free Library's Pandemic Response Plan should be directed to the Director.

  
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Rosemary Wein  
President, Board of Trustees

3/24/2021  
Date