

MHLS Pandemic Policy

I. Purpose:

The Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) strives to maintain a safe workplace and protect the health and wellness of employees and visitors in the event of a severe pandemic. To ensure the continuity of business operations in the event of a severe pandemic, efforts for an effective response will be guided by, and in accordance with, all applicable federal, state and local laws and guidelines issued by public health authorities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other governmental agencies.

II. Definitions

- a. "Pandemic" A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. It differs from an outbreak or epidemic because it:
 - i. affects a wider geographical area, often worldwide.
 - ii. infects a greater number of people than an epidemic.
 - iii. is often caused by a new virus or a strain of virus that has not circulated among people for a long time. Humans usually have little to no immunity against it. The virus spreads quickly from person-to-person worldwide.
 - iv. causes much higher numbers of deaths than epidemics.
 - v. often creates social disruption, economic loss, and general hardship.(Source: Association for Professionals in Infection control and Epidemiology)
- b. "Pandemic Plan": A pandemic 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 rebuilding, almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire or storm, or if there is an extended utility outage). If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more.

III. Prevention:

All employees are asked to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of pandemic illness in the workplace. We encourage employees to assist in reducing the transmission of pandemic illness by following the suggestions provided by the CDC:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Staying home when you are sick.
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household wipe which will be provided by MHLS

IV. Staying Home When Ill:

- a. The Mid-Hudson Library System provides full-time employees with paid sick time and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. During flu season and/or in the case of a pandemic, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing



influenza-like symptoms such as: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, diarrhea, vomiting and fatigue. The CDC has recommended that people with influenza-like illness remain home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.9 degrees C).

- b. If a full-time or part-time employee tests positive for the infectious disease related to the pandemic or has a doctor's order to self-quarantine they will not be charged personal time off for the equivalent of two weeks paid sick time proportional to the number of days/hours assigned. MHLS Administration will decide, based on information from county, state and federal public health authorities when a pandemic has been declared. The number of hours paid each day will be the amount typically worked on the day missed. Unused sick leave related to this policy cannot be used beyond the limited period defined by MHLS Administration. The purpose of this benefit is to limit the spread of contagious illness to fellow staff/visitors.
- c. If an employee comes to work and displays influenza-like symptoms during a pandemic MHLS Administration may send the employee home.

V. Work Schedules

- a. A severe pandemic illness could result in a significant level of absenteeism. Some employees may be unable to work if they become ill due to the virus while others may need to remain home to care for ill family members or to provide care for children during school closings. During this time, unless otherwise notified, our normal attendance and leave policies will remain in place with the exception noted in item IV.b.
- b. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during a severe pandemic illness should take steps now to develop any necessary contingency plans. For example, employees might want to arrange for alternative sources of childcare should schools close and/or speak with supervisors about the potential to work from home temporarily or on an alternative work schedule if necessary.

VI. Confidentiality of Medical Information:

Any medical information obtained from an employee or an employee's health care provider, including any voluntary disclosure that the employee has contracted a specific influenza-related illness, will be kept confidential. In furtherance of this policy, any disclosure of influenza-related medical information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis and only as necessary to prevent or slow the spread of the illness at work, while maintaining confidentiality to the extent reasonably possible. Information will be shared with government officials only if required by law.

VII. Government Mandated Quarantine / Containment

Should the government mandate a quarantine or define a containment zone that includes an employee's residence or the MHLS headquarters location in Poughkeepsie, NY staff will not be charged for personal time off. All telecommuting eligible positions will be expected to work from home at the direction of their supervisor.

VIII. Additional Information

Please see the Financial Manager & Personnel Officer for additional information.