



# Pandemic Response Plan

## Procedures for the Poudre River Public Library District 9/25/09

### I. Purpose and Rationale

In June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level for novel influenza A (H1N1) to Phase 6, the highest level, to reflect the widespread and active transmission of the H1N1 virus from person to person. This action was in response to the spread of the new H1N1 virus, rather than the severity of illness caused by the virus. In April 2009 the United States Department of Health and Human Services issued a nationwide public health emergency declaration.

The Poudre River Public Library District is establishing this plan in response to threats posed by the H1N1 virus and related infectious influenza. The District seeks a measured and responsible response to the pandemic. These procedures represent the District's commitment to provide library services to the public in the safest and most effective way possible during a period of pandemic influenza.

The local and national conditions of pandemic influenza change on a daily basis. An effective District response is subject to modification based on new information and shifting conditions. These procedures are therefore subject to change as the District identifies the most effective responses to the pandemic.

The District maintains a long-term, vital partnership with Front Range Community College-Larimer Campus in the operations of the joint use Harmony Library, located on the campus and owned by the college. Harmony Library serves as both a public library for the surrounding community and as the campus library serving the entire college community. In matters of mutual interest related to Harmony Library's operations and services, the District will consult and confer with the College to reach decisions that the two parties agree are in the best interests of both service communities.

## II. Coordination with Public Health Authorities and Local Government

An effective response to pandemic influenza requires ongoing coordination with public health authorities and local governmental and educational entities. The Library District is formulating its response to the threat posed by pandemic influenza in cooperation with local, state and national health authorities and in consultation with local city and county governments and educational entities such as Poudre School District and Colorado State University. These procedures are based on recommendations from the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment (LCDHE) (<http://www.co.larimer.co.us/health> and <http://www.larimerflu.org>), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/epr/h1n1.html>), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU>) and the United States Government (<http://www.flu.gov>).

## III. Communications

- a. Communications, both internal and external, are a critical component of the District's response. The District is committed to communicating in a timely and accurate manner with the public, staff, public health entities, the media and community partners. The District will continually monitor external factors, update procedures based on the latest and best information available, and communicate changes effectively. The District participates in the Northern Colorado Public Communicators group (NCPC), a group that "works closely with the public information officer of LCDHE throughout all pandemic phases to create and disseminate consistent, credible and timely pandemic flu messages" (from the *Larimer County Pandemic Flu Plan "Communicating with the Public"*)
- b. Insure that all staff members understand District plans and procedures. Pandemic influenza is potentially a source of considerable anxiety. Educating staff by sharing the most current and accurate information available is the most effective way to reduce anxiety.

In an effort to inform staff the District will:

- i. Develop a frequently asked questions (FAQ) page to help staff understand District procedures, and communicate plans and procedures to the public.
  - ii. Invite questions from staff regarding plans, afford staff the opportunity throughout the pandemic response period to express concerns and suggestions.
  - iii. Respond to staff questions and comments as soon as possible.
- c. Inform the public of the District's planning efforts and ongoing response to the pandemic.

In an effort to inform the public the District will:

- i. Post current information about the library's pandemic response on the District's internet site.
  - ii. Develop and maintain an FAQ for the public.
  - iii. Respond to questions from members of the public as soon as possible.
  - iv. Participate in the Northern Colorado Public Communicators group (NCPC).
  - v. Inform local media of relevant changes to library operations and procedures.
- d. Networking. The District will network cooperatively with public health authorities, local governmental and educational entities, and other organizations and groups in the community.
  - e. Communications with other libraries and professional organizations. The District will work cooperatively with regional, state and national library organizations and Colorado public libraries.

#### **IV. Library Operations**

##### **a. Continuity of Services**

The District 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 and respond adequately to the threat presented by pandemic H1N1 influenza. However, significant changes to library operations and services have the potential to disrupt normal operations more than the effects of pandemic influenza alone. The District will consider costs and benefits to residents and staff of all proposed changes to procedure. Please see Section V., "Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services" below for further details.

The District will maintain library services to the greatest extent possible while simultaneously working to provide safe facilities and cooperating with public health authorities.

##### **b. Public Health Measures**

The District is committed to providing safe and sanitary facilities for the public and for library staff. Based on recommendations from the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment, the CDC, or other public health authorities, the District may decide to temporarily increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing in its facilities, especially areas and surfaces that experience the highest use.

However, no amount of reasonable effort can ever guarantee that public places are free of infectious agents, including the H1N1 and seasonal influenza viruses. Even a recently cleaned and disinfected surface can potentially transmit disease once touched by a sick person. With approximately 3,000 visitors a day to our three public facilities, the District encourages individuals to take preventative measures as a necessary component in minimizing public health risks in the library.

The District emphasizes prevention and individual responsibility for taking steps that contribute to keeping well and helping prevent the spread of influenza. To that end, the District provides public and staff with convenient access to hand sanitizer, hand washing facilities, disinfecting wipes, and facial tissues in all of our facilities. The District will post signs in restrooms encouraging hand washing and routine practices that help minimize the spread of influenza from person to person.

c. Temporary Reduction or Suspension of Services

During the course of an influenza pandemic, public health authorities may advise that libraries and other gathering places minimize or entirely suspend situations where numerous individuals congregate in relatively confined spaces. In such cases the Executive Director may decide to temporarily discontinue library programs, for example, story times for children and musical and historical programs for adults, and use of library meeting rooms by the public.

d. Temporary Closure of District Facilities

Closure of one or more of the District's libraries will be at the discretion of the Executive Director. In the case of Harmony, closure will be considered jointly with senior administrators of the Front Range Community College-Larimer Campus.

District libraries may be closed temporarily under one or more of the following conditions:

- i. Public health authorities, such as the Director of the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment, advise, request or order such closure.
- ii. The Poudre School District closes public schools in the District.
- iii. Public visitation is too low to warrant keeping libraries open.
- iv. Too few staff members are available to operate libraries.
- v. Front Range Community College-Larimer Campus closes due to the pandemic.
- vi. Any other conditions which prevent the District from operating public facilities safely and effectively.

## V. **Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services**

The District provides crucial resources and services to residents. The District will strive to minimize negative impacts on access to resources and services resulting from procedures adopted in response to pandemic influenza.

The District will work to preserve access to its online resources both in its libraries and remotely. Residents with home Internet access can use the District's online resources remotely and when libraries are closed. The District will strive to maintain access to its Internet site, subscription databases, and online catalog even in the event that the District's physical facilities are closed temporarily.

The District recognizes that many residents lack home computers or online access and rely on the public library to provide free Internet access. While District libraries remain open, the District will strive to maintain public Internet access insofar as it is possible to do so safely.

In coordination with health authorities the District will consider alternatives to complete suspension of public computing, depending on emerging conditions. Measures might include provision of disinfectant wipes, social distancing measures to increase space between simultaneous computer users, and potentially even latex gloves and health care facemasks.

In the event of a temporary closure of the library, the District may suspend all due dates, suspend all late fees, or both. The District will use its Internet site, library e-mail distribution lists, and work with local media to publicize any such suspension. The District would encourage the public to keep checked out items in their homes until further notice. A suspension would be advantageous for a number of reasons. It would help prevent libraries from being inundated with returned materials while no items were getting checked out. It would prevent customers from feeling the need to venture to the library to return materials, as a suspension would provide assurance that no fines would accrue on items currently checked out.

### **Potential Procedures with significant negative impacts on library operations**

#### Quarantine on recently returned items

It is possible that a quarantine period on recently returned materials is recommended by public health authorities. The District will consider how such a process might be implemented as well as how operational problems might be addressed.

The CDC recently reported that influenza virus can remain viable on objects for up to eight hours\*. A quarantine period of eight or more hours would disrupt normal operations significantly. Checking in and shelving of returned materials would be delayed. Secure temporary storage areas and additional, movable bins would be needed. Required space is not readily available in all of our libraries. A materials quarantine might necessitate closure of one or more of

our meeting rooms for the duration of the procedure. In contemplating such a significant departure from normal operations, the District will consider both the practicality of proposed measures, and the actual, rather than presumed, public health benefits, in consultation with authorities.

\*[Source: CDC Internet site "Questions & Answers 2009 H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You" (<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm>):

***How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?*** *Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.]*

#### Disinfecting and cleaning of all returned library items

The suggestion might arise that a procedure be implemented that staff clean each returned item at the time of check in. Due to the inordinate amount of time required such a procedure would prove impractical to the point of slowing library operations to a near standstill. In addition while surface covers of library items might potentially be cleaned it is not possible to disinfect each page of returned books. Finally, effective disinfecting methods such as heat, liquids and gels would likely damage or destroy library items, especially with repeated application.

Even if one or both of the processes above were implemented---quarantining and individual disinfecting---the items would be subject to being touched again by members of the public as soon as they were re-shelved.

#### Closed stacks

All libraries in the District currently have "open" stacks, which means that library users have direct and free access to shelves where books, CDs, DVDs and other items are stored, and are able to retrieve items themselves. Health officials or others might suggest that the District implement a system of "closed" stacks for a period of time. In a closed stack arrangement only staff can access shelved materials, and staff must retrieve requested materials for the public.

Such a system is highly impractical for any of our libraries given the physical arrangement of District facilities and current work flow processes. Both have been designed to facilitate self-directed service. A closed stack system would be highly difficult, time consuming and inefficient to implement in District libraries.

## **VI. Library Staff**

### **a. General**

The District is committed to communicating with staff regarding its pandemic influenza plans to insure that all staff members understand the procedures and their role in the District's response. The District will make

every effort to respond to staff concerns and questions and will consider revising procedures based on continuing dialog with staff members throughout the library.

b. Personnel Policies and Procedures

During a pandemic many human resources questions regarding staffing and personnel matters will arise.

The Poudre River Public Library District Board of Trustees has adopted the Personnel Policies of the City of Fort Collins (COFC) as the personnel policies of the District. The District contracts for Human Resources support with the COFC.

COFC Personnel Policies and Human Resources department staff will inform the District's response to relevant issues such as paid time off, sick leave and return from sick leave, Family Medical Leave, emergency leave for hourly employees, extended benefits, working from home, and related matters.

c. Prevention and Personal Responsibility

The emphasis of the District's response is on good hygiene habits and personal responsibility in preventing the spread of seasonal and H1N1 influenza. The District encourages staff to follow the CDC/LCDHE guidelines which aim to slow the spread of the virus in these ways:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Keep your children home from school or daycare [or the library] if they are sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cough into your shoulder or the bend of your arm.
- If you use a tissue, throw it away in the trash right away and then wash your hands.
- Wash your hands frequently throughout the day for 30 seconds with soap and water.
- Use an alcohol hand sanitizer if you can't find soap and water.
- Be prepared for taking care of yourself or your family members at home if you or they get sick.
- Get a flu shot for the seasonal flu as well as the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. Seasonal flu can cause serious illness and is widespread during the same season as H1N1.

Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and tissues will be stocked and available for staff and the public at each public desk and in staff work areas.

d. Continuity of Services with Minimal Staffing

Library managers, including lead librarians, will develop continuity of service plans with reduced, less than optimal staffing levels. They will identify

methods of staffing desks and service areas in District facilities and providing a basic level of service should illness temporarily reduce the library's available workforce during pandemic.

e. Library Closures

In the event that one or two District libraries are closed, library managers will first work to identify tasks for employees to perform at the facility or facilities remaining open. Employees from closed facilities may be reassigned to open facilities if productive work is available. Depending on the nature of the closure, selected staff may continue to work in District facilities to perform tasks related to continuity of services. Potential on-site work tasks during a public closure might include:

- Collections inventory
- Processing and cataloging
- Retrospective spine labeling for materials on shelves
- Insure collections are in correct order by shelf reading the spine labels on materials.
- Collection management
- Computer and network maintenance and support (internal and external)
- Shifting collections
- Self guided computer training opportunities for staff on software and online resources.
- Materials repair
- Building projects and repairs
- Mailing out materials from the library
- Providing telephone reference from various locations, possibly reassigning staff to expand this service.
- Providing online reference service via e-mail and Ask Colorado.
- Administrative activities

In the event of either a partial or complete closure of District facilities, the type and amount of paid and unpaid leave available to employees will be determined by the District with the assistance of the COFC Human Resources department and in accordance with COFC Personnel Policies.

f. Working from Home

In the event of a partial or complete closure of the library, or if an emerging situation related to pandemic influenza warrants it the District will consider work-at-home possibilities for appropriate staff in an effort to maintain the continuity of limited library services. Processes and procedures for working from home are described generally in COFC Personnel Policies 5.6, "Teleworking".

**VII. Additional Resources** (from the Larimer County Health website)

**<http://www.flu.gov>**

For reliable and updated general information on seasonal and H1N1 flu, flu vaccinations, signs and symptoms, etc., from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

**<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/whatsnew.htm>**

The chronological additions to the above website, so you can always find the latest information

**<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/epr/h1n1.html>**

What's happening in Colorado? Link to the Colorado Department of Health and Environment for links to state-specific information, guidelines and general information on seasonal and H1N1 flu.

The Colorado Home Healthcare Guide can be downloaded from this site in either English or Spanish. It contains valuable resources and tips on caring for sick people at home (including kids).

**<http://www.colorado.gov/nofluforyou>**

General information on H1N1 and seasonal flu from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment.

**COHELP toll-free at 1-877-462-2911**; telephone information in English and Spanish

**<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/>**

Specific guidance and toolkits for managing H1N1 flu for groups including clinicians, pregnant women, schools, faith communities, shelters, pregnant women, infants and young children, people with asthma, early childhood care providers, health care settings, colleges and universities, businesses among others. Contains information and guidance on using masks to prevent the spread of flu droplets.

**<http://www.aap.org/>**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has lots of information for parents and parental concerns

**<http://www.preventinfluenza.org/>**

This site is sponsored by the National Influenza Vaccine Summit and has reliable information on flu vaccinations

**<http://www.familiesfightingflu.org/>**

Materials about the flu for parents

**<http://www.Readycolorado.com>**

This site is full of valuable checklists and information that will allow you and your family to be prepared for any type of emergency.

English and Spanish  
phone: 1.800.639.READY (7323)

**<http://www.larimer.org/health/chs/flu.htm>**

This site focuses on the solely on the seasonal flu, the flu that circulates every year in late fall and winter. It will provide you with information about seasonal flu and up-to-date information on when and where you can go to get your influenza vaccination in Larimer County.  
970-498-6706

**<http://www.dphe.state.co.us/dc/Influenza/avian/index.html>**

This site will provide you with a pandemic flu fact sheet that answers frequently asked questions.

Colorado Department of Health and Environment  
language: English and Spanish  
phone: 1.800.866.7689  
303.691.7700 TTD

**<http://www.ready.gov>**

This site will show you how easy it is to be prepared and informed. It also includes contact information for other Colorado agencies for more information.

Ready America  
language: English and Spanish  
phone: 1.202.282.8000  
1.866.644.8361 TTY

**<http://www.ready.gov/kids>**

This site will take kids on a fun exploration to forming a plan, knowing the facts and creating a preparedness kit. This provides a great way for a family to work on preparedness activities together.

**<http://www.fema.gov/kids/index.htm>**

This interactive and fun website for kids will teach the importance of being prepared for any type of emergency through games and quizzes.

**<http://www.redcross.org>**

Make a plan, Get a kit, Be informed

This site will help you prepare your home, school, business and community for a disease outbreak or other emergency situations.

English and Spanish  
Centennial Chapter - Fort Collins, CO 80525  
970-226-5728  
<http://www.northerncolorado.redcross.org>