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Continuity of Operations Plan

Harford County Public Library

David Craig has asked that all agencies that operate within Harford County develop a Continuity of Operations Plan, focusing on what our agency can do in the development of an influenza pandemic when up to 40% of the staff may be out sick during peak weeks, 35% for a prolonged period of time. It is not possible to predict exactly what may happen when, but the following are suggestions for how the Library can continue to offer public service with reduced staff available for an extended period.

How service could be cut, in priority order:

- Branches could be closed, in the following order:
 - Darlington
 - Norrisville
 - Joppa
 - Havre de Grace
 - Jarrettsville
 - Fallston

- Reduce hours (in priority order):
 - Close on Wednesdays (allows all available staff to offer public service for a 5 day week, M, T, Th, F, S)
 - Close Thursday evening
 - Close Fridays

We propose closing branches first as opposed to altering schedules because it is easier for customers to get used to a branch being closed than to remember an adjusted schedule. Further, it will be easier to maximize staff use if we are open our usual full-week schedule. As conditions worsen and staff becomes less available, we should plan to use the Sunday staffing model – people not usually in public service are used as librarians, reference assistants, circ staff, etc. as appropriate. The following services may also need to be temporarily discontinued, depending on staff availability and availability of customer base:

- Opening the Gift
- Sharing the Gift
- Rolling Reader
- Silver Reader
- Detention Center

Administrative Department service to continue, in priority order:

- Payroll and benefits – staff must be paid and mass use of sick leave is likely to result in additional questions
- Finance – Bills need to be paid and money managed even in the event of the crisis
- Technical Services – previously ordered materials will continue to arrive and if they are not processed and made ready for public use they will quickly become a serious storage problem. Also, to continue the level of public service we are proud to provide, we want to get the new materials onto the shelves.
- Delivery – because we have both RFID/self checkout and gated security/staff checkout systems, we will need some level of delivery (reduced as we close branches) to both take new items to branches and move others (returns and holds) around the system.
- Human Resources – with all the temporary staffing changes as a result of the need for a contingency plan, we will need at least some HR staff to deal with scheduling and problems. Some support staff will be needed to staff the reception desk.
- Technology Support – we may not need a complete computer support team, but there are always fires to put out and we want to maintain good public service in the branches we can keep open.
- Materials Management – this department's staff can be re-deployed; its staff members are already used to performing regular public service and we can go a few weeks without ordering if we have to
- Marketing – this department's staff is less able to contribute effectively in the public service arena, but again, we can go a few weeks without promoting programs and services, other than adjusted openings.
- Other administrative staff – can be decided on a case-by-case basis.

As we examine each department, looking at what must be accomplished in times of the contingency plan, we may find that some staff in each department can be re-deployed to the branches. We can maintain full public service in the branches we are able to keep open by closing some branches one at a time as necessary, closing on Wednesdays, and re-deploying healthy staff from closed branches and administrative departments.

In addition to contingency plans for how to continue to provide public library service, we also want to consider some preventative measures for how to avoid and keep from spreading illness. This could involve the purchase of gloves and/or disinfectant spray for staff to use as they handle materials that have been out in circulation and share telephone and other equipment. As we get closer to the time of emergency, information should be widely available for how people in public service can take precautions.