



PRESS RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Howard County Library System to Begin Contactless Pickup on June 29

(Ellicott City, MD) – On Monday, June 29, Howard County Library System (HCLS) will begin Phase 3 of its reopening plan with contactless pickup of items on hold on Monday, June 29. Contactless pickup will be available Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm at all six branches.

“Since closing on March 16, our innovative team pivoted quickly and effectively to begin working remotely to assist customers, develop and teach virtual classes, make more eBooks and eAudiobooks available, and engage the community. In Phase 2, we shifted from triage operations to preparations for our phased reopening plan. Throughout these first two phases, we have been in conversation with library colleagues and professionals in other fields across the state, country, and world on best practices for reopening,” said Tonya Aikens, HCLS President & CEO. “The health, safety, and well-being of our staff and customers remains top priority. Guidance from health officials and the CDC continues to inform our plans. Decisions about how we progress to future phases will depend on the most current health and safety guidelines.”

“Libraries are one of the most visited places in our county and are essential to lifelong learning and enrichment for our residents of all ages and abilities,” said County Executive Calvin Ball. “The HCLS team has been instrumental in connecting residents with online resources throughout this pandemic, and we're thrilled they have found a safe way to provide more access to our residents with contactless pickup.”

HCLS staff began returning to branches on Thursday, June 18 to further prepare for contactless pickup. More than 300,000 items were borrowed before HCLS closed, and customers have placed requests for more than 52,000 items since then. Staff received personal protective equipment, and are scheduled in rotating four-hour shifts to minimize time in branches. All items retrieved from book drops – and returned during contactless pickup – will be quarantined for 72 hours.

How will contactless pickup work?

1. Place items on hold.

- a. Search the Library’s catalog for titles of interest. To request items from the DIY or art collections, please call Central Branch at 410.313.7800 (for art) or ElkrIDGE Branch at 410.313.5077 (DIY).
- b. Use your HCLS-registered library card or A+ student account (for HCPSS students) and PIN to log in and place requests, selecting your preferred pickup location.
- c. You may also make requests by phone by calling your HCLS branch during business hours (10 am – 6 pm, Monday – Saturday).

2. Wait for notification, then reserve a pickup day and time.

- a. You will receive a notice when your holds are available for pickup.
- b. Beginning June 29, fill out the Contactless Holds Pickup Request form or call your pickup branch to make an appointment for contactless pickup.
- c. Prior to your appointment, HCLS staff will locate your items, check them out to your account, and bag them. The bag will be labeled with your name and placed on a table in the lobby of the pickup branch.

(more)

3. At the scheduled date and time, pick up your holds at the designated pickup location.

- a. When you arrive, maintain at least 6 feet of social distance from others. Face coverings are required.
- b. If you notice another customer in the lobby, please remain outside until the previous customer has departed. Then approach the table and locate the bag(s) labeled with your name.
- c. Grab your bag and go – items have already been checked out to you. Your receipt will be in the bag.

During the contactless pickup phase, HCLS branches will not be open to the public and restrooms will be unavailable. Please also note the Library cannot accept donations at this time. Drop donations in the green Better World Books donation drop-off boxes in Library branch parking lots. Please do not bring donations to Library branches or leave them by the front doors or book drops.

Visit hclibrary.org for more information.

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