

## Interim Guidance: Get Your Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known [about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

This interim guidance is to help community- and faith-based organizations (CFBOs), whose members may include [vulnerable populations](#), plan for community transmission of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages CFBOs to prepare for the possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak in their local communities.

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus. There is [much to learn about its transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease](#).

### ***Before a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community: Plan***

A COVID-19 outbreak could last for a long time. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, public health officials may recommend community actions designed to limit exposure to COVID-19. Officials may ask you to modify, postpone, or cancel large events for the safety and well-being of your event staff, participants, and the community. The details of your emergency operations plan should be based on the size and duration of your events, demographics of the participants, complexity of your event operations, and type of on-site services and activities your event may offer.

### ***Establish ongoing communication with your local public health department to facilitate access to relevant information before and during an outbreak.***

Having a good contingency plan in place and developing flexible policies and procedures to accommodate public health recommendations can help reduce infection. During your planning process, remember to engage key partners across both public and private sectors, such as local businesses, schools, other community- and faith-based organizations, and community leaders. Also, the specific details of your plan should be based on the extent of the outbreak and the size of your organization and workforce, complexity of your day-to-day operations, and type of on-site and off-site services your organization provides to vulnerable populations.

### ***Connect to community-wide planning***

Find out if your local government has a private-public emergency planning group that meets regularly. Building strong alliances before an outbreak may provide your organization with the support and resources needed to respond effectively. Also, in recognition of the [“whole community” approach](#) to emergency planning and management, your input as community leaders and stakeholders helps ensure the completeness and representativeness of your local government’s emergency operations plan.

## *Update your existing emergency operations plan*

**Meet with your emergency operations coordinator or planning team to update your emergency operations plan.** If your organization does not have a person or team in place, determine who will be responsible for coordinating your organization's emergency operations plan. Review all aspects of your organization, such as personnel, systems, services, and other resources. Prepare for key prevention strategies outlined in this guidance. Update your plan based on various scenarios your organization may face during a COVID-19 outbreak in your community.

**Consider the needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and other individuals with access and functional needs in your response plan.** Helpful resources are available online, such as the [Capacity-Building Toolkit for Including Aging and Disability Networks in Emergency Planning](#).

**Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders.** When forming key relationships, include the local public health department, other community and faith leaders, local businesses, and educational institutions. Collaborate and coordinate with them on broader planning efforts. Clearly identify each partner's role, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Review the COVID-19 plan for your community and participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.

**Identify services which might be limited or temporarily discontinued during an outbreak.** Find alternative solutions that will ensure continuity for your community, especially for vulnerable populations served by your organization.

## *Address key prevention strategies in your emergency operations plan*

**Promote the practice of everyday preventive actions.** Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources, such as your local and state public health departments or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Read more about [everyday preventive actions](#).

**Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies at your organization.** Have supplies on hand for staff, volunteers, and those you serve, such as soap, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, tissues, trash baskets, and disposable facemasks. Plan to have extra supplies on hand during a COVID-19 outbreak.

*Note: [Disposable facemasks](#) should be kept on site and used only when someone becomes sick at your organization. Those who become sick should be immediately isolated from those who are not sick and given a clean disposable facemask to wear until they can leave.*

**Plan for staff absences.** Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies. Staff (and volunteers) may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick household member, or caring for their children in

the event of school dismissals. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff members.

*Note: Use a process similar to when you cover for and staff workers during the holidays.*

**Develop a method for monitoring and tracking COVID-19-related staff absences.** Understand the usual absenteeism patterns at your organization. Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt day-to-day operations. If staff absenteeism increases to disruptive levels, some organizations may need to consider temporarily reducing on-site operations and services.

**Identify space that can be used to separate sick people (if possible).** Designate a space for people who may become sick while at work and cannot leave immediately. If possible, designate a nearby separate bathroom just for sick people. Develop a plan for cleaning the room daily.

**Plan ways to limit face-to-face contact between people at your organization.** Several ways to do this include offering workers the option to telework, replacing in-person meetings in the workplace with video or telephone conferences, and postponing non-essential meetings and travel.

**Review your process for planning events, programs, and services.** Identify actions to take if you need to temporarily postpone or cancel events, programs, and services. Consider limiting access to your organization by non-essential visitors.

**Plan ways to continue essential services if on-site operations are scaled back temporarily.** Provide web- and mobile-based communications and services, if possible. Increase the use of email, conference calls, video conferencing, and web-based seminars.

## ***Communicate about COVID-19 and everyday preventive actions***

**Update your emergency communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information.** Identify everyone in your chain of communication (for example, staff, volunteers, and key community partners and stakeholders) and establish systems for sharing information with them. Maintain up-to-date contact information for everyone in the chain of communication. Identify platforms, such as a hotline, automated text messaging, and a website to help disseminate information to those inside and outside your organization.

**Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to workers and those you serve.** Learn more about [reaching people of diverse languages and cultures](#). You also can learn more about [communicating to workers in a crisis](#).

**Help counter [stigma and discrimination](#) in your community.** Engage with stigmatized groups and speak out against negative behaviors.

## ***Get input and support for your emergency operations and communication plans***

**Share your plans with staff, volunteers, and key community partners and stakeholders.** Develop training and educational materials about the plans for staff and volunteers.

**Maintain and expand your emergency planning team.** Look for ways to expand community partnerships. Identify agencies or partners needed to help you prepare for other emergencies in the future and make an effort to add them to your planning team.

An infectious disease outbreak can occur at any time and having a plan in place is essential. Your contingency or emergency operations plan for COVID-19 will help protect the health and safety of your staff, volunteers, and those you serve, while preserving normal operations. Continue to coordinate your planning activities with local public health officials and key community partners and stakeholders to help maintain essential services.

## ***COVID-19 Readiness Resources***

- Visit [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://cdc.gov/COVID19) for the latest information and resources about COVID-19
- [COVID 2019 Situation Summary](#)
- [Prevention and Treatment](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [Pregnant Women and COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [FAQs: Coronavirus Disease-2019 \(COVID-19\) and Children](#)
- [Stigma Related to COVID-19](#)
- [Handwashing: A Family Activity](#)
- [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#)

## ***CDC Communication Resources***

- [Interim Guidance: Public Health Communicators Get Your Community Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Print Resources](#)
- [Buttons and Badges](#)

*All information referenced in this document was derived from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).*