

COVID-19: Guidance for Community- and Faith-based Organizations

The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is monitoring closely the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. Current information suggests that person-to-person spread will continue to occur and more cases might be identified in the United States, including in Chicago. CDPH's goal is to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Chicago by detecting new cases quickly, minimizing transmission and developing guidance to prepare communities to respond.

The following interim guidance is intended for community- and faith-based organizations and may prevent exposures to all acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

Recommended strategies for organizations to use now:

Actively encourage sick employees and those you serve to stay home:

- People who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home until they are free of fever (100.4°F) for at least 24 hours.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Talk with companies that provide your organization with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Separate sick persons:

- Persons who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to your organization or become sick during their visit should be separated from others and be sent home immediately. Sick persons should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available), and perform hand hygiene.
- Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene:
 - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your facility and in other areas where they are likely to be seen.
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
 - Instruct employees and those you serve to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down before each use.

Advise employees and those you serve to check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which they will travel.

Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in Chicago:

Update your existing emergency operations plan:

- **Meet with your emergency operations coordinator or planning team to develop or update your emergency operations plan.** Review all aspects of your organization, such as personnel, systems, services, and other resources. Make preparations for key prevention strategies.
- **Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders.** When forming key relationships, include other community and faith leaders, and local businesses. Collaborate and coordinate with them on broader planning efforts. Clearly define each partner's role, responsibilities, and decision-making authority.

Promote the daily practice of *everyday preventive actions* at all times. Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources, such as your local public health department or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Provide respiratory illness prevention supplies in your organization. Have supplies on hand for workers and those you serve, such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and trash baskets.

- *Note: Keep hand sanitizers out of reach of small children. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers has raised concerns about eye contamination, skin reactions, alcohol poisoning, and flammability. Small children should only use hand sanitizers under adult supervision.*

Plan for worker absences. Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies. Workers may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick household member, or caring for their children. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff (similar to planning for holiday staffing).

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

Plan ways to increase the space between people or limit face-to-face contact between people at your organization. Several ways to do this include teleworking, creating reduced or staggered schedules, spacing people farther apart, and postponing non-essential meetings and travel.

This version was released on 02/28/2020. It may be updated with new guidance. Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.

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 reduced. Provide web- and mobile- based communications and services, if possible. Increase the use of email, conference calls, video conferencing, and web-based seminars.

Update your emergency communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information. Identify everyone in your chain of communication (for example, workers and key community partners and stakeholders) and establish systems for sharing information with them. Maintain up-to-date contact information for everyone in the communication chain. 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 information to workers and those you serve.

Fight stigma and fear by supporting people who are coming back to work or the community after completing their quarantine or isolation period for COVID-19 exposure or illness.

- Someone who has completed their quarantine or met the requirements to discontinue infection control measures does not pose a risk of spreading COVID-19.
- People who have not been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case are not at greater risk of acquiring and spreading this new virus than others.
- People who returned more than 14 days ago from areas where COVID-19 is active and do not have symptoms of coronavirus do not put others at risk.

Help fight fear by letting people know that being of Asian descent does not increase the chance of getting or spreading COVID-19.

- Viruses cannot target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds.
- People of Asian descent, including Chinese Americans, are not more likely to get coronavirus than anyone else.

For more information, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus, email coronavirus@chicago.gov, or call **312-746-4835**.