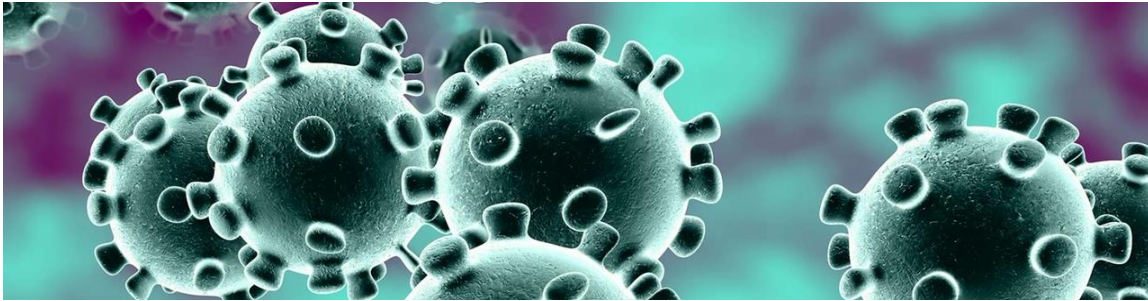


**Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19):**

**Managing the Spread of the Virus in Your Community**



As COVID-19, otherwise known as the coronavirus disease, has spread across the state of Georgia, more and more cities and counties have issued stay-at-home orders. While these stay-at-home orders are helping to slow the spread of this highly contagious virus, more and more cases of COVID-19 are reported each day. In fact, as of Friday, April 3, 2020, Georgia is the eleventh most infected state in the United States, according to Johns Hopkins University. The likelihood of someone in your community becoming infected with COVID-19 is significantly rising, so we recommend that all community associations develop a plan of action for if that occurs.

We believe that community associations can play a large role in helping minimize the spread of the virus by being proactive and taking preventative measures. The following are a few suggestions to help your community develop a plan of action if your community is affected by COVID-19.

**Encourage Residents to Report Symptoms and Give Community-Wide Notifications**

Knowing that a resident in your community was exposed to or may be infected with the virus is crucial to managing the spread of the virus in your community. Because of this, communities should encourage residents to voluntarily disclose to their community managers when they have been exposed to or infected by the virus, and communities should tell residents that any personal information about voluntary disclosures will be kept in confidence. Likewise, communities should consider offering support services to those persons while they are recovering, such as delivering groceries or other supplies.

**Knowing that a resident in your community was exposed to or may be infected with the virus is crucial to managing the spread of the virus in your community.**

If a resident chooses to voluntarily disclose this information, communities **should not** disclose the names, addresses, units, or any other identifying information of the infected individuals to the other members of the community. Communities can, however, release notifications to the community advising the residents of the total amount of infected or suspected number of those infected in the community. If communities can maintain open and honest communication channels with residents about the prevalence of the virus in their communities, they may be able to better minimize the spread of the virus and allocate sanitization and other services more effectively.

## **Manage Non-Essential Visitors**

Depending on your specific community's rulemaking authority, another way to help slow the spread of the virus is to create a policy temporarily restricting or limiting non-essential guests within your community. For example, communities may consider temporarily limiting non-essential visitors entering the community, such as requiring food delivery drivers to leave food deliveries at a concierge desk, requiring package deliveries to be left in the lobby of a building, or postponing any non-urgent maintenance or repair projects in the common areas that require additional personnel. This may be especially relevant for condominium communities.

## **Enforce Social Distancing**

Communities should also consider issuing communications encouraging owners to follow the CDC's recommendations for social distancing. To do so, communities may consider publishing the CDC's recommendations and publishing a notice to the community along the following lines:

The CDC recommends that you protect yourself and others by:

- *Staying home from work, school, and all activities when you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, which may include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.*
- *Keeping away from others who are sick.*
- *Limiting close contact with others as much as possible (about 6 feet).*

## **Regularly Disinfect Association-Owned Property**

As discussed in our previous blog post, we advised communities to close amenities, such as the community pool, gym, clubhouse, etc., and to regularly clean and disinfect association property. Cleaning and disinfecting common areas is even more crucial when a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case is in the community.

**Communities should frequently clean and disinfect routinely touched surfaces including doorknobs, elevators and elevator buttons, pedestrian gates, handrails, and any other frequently touched surfaces.**

Communities should frequently clean and disinfect routinely touched surfaces including doorknobs, elevators and elevator buttons, pedestrian gates, handrails, and any other frequently touched surfaces. It is also a good idea to routinely clean and disinfect commonly traveled areas including hallways, entrance areas, elevators, and other high-traffic areas. Additionally, associations may want to take additional measures such as employing cleaning personnel, installing hand sanitizer stations, and even temporarily removing courtyard furniture, lobby furniture or other shared furniture accessible by the membership in the common areas.

## **Host a Virtual Community Event**

While we recommend that communities enforce social distancing recommendations and postpone any in-person events or meetings, we encourage communities to look to technology as a means for staying in touch with community members during this time. Whether you want to host a virtual happy hour, hold a community town hall meeting, or just check in with your neighbors, video conferencing is a useful tool for staying connected with other members in your community while still practicing social distancing.