



## Coronavirus and Nonprofits

**Be prepared in case your nonprofit experiences an outbreak**

Friday, March 6, Oklahoma heard about the first confirmed case of coronavirus in the state. As of today, hundreds of cases have been confirmed in the United States. Epidemiologists and local health departments as well as the CDC believe that number will increase as more testing is available. Last night, the Oklahoma City Thunder and Utah Jazz game was suspended prompting the NBA to suspend its season for the time-being. Travel from Europe is also suspended.

While many are on pins and needles, we should take this seriously and not panic. While the coronavirus (COVID-19) does have a slightly higher rate of death, infectious disease specialists have been quick to point out that many of the deaths are associated with co-morbidities such as weakened lung capacity, immune systems, etc., along with advanced age. Additionally, we now know that the spread of the disease is typically associated with close contact.

***So what should nonprofits do right now? A few very important things, and most of them are about protecting your staff, volunteers and clientele.***

### **HYGIENE**

We cannot stress this enough, but rigorous protocols around handwashing should be adhered to at all times. Wash for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water. While hand sanitizer works well, specialists recommend that handwashing is the most effective way of stopping the spread of the disease.

Also clean surfaces regularly – at least once a day if they are communal. Specialists recommend Clorox or Lysol brand wipes. A DIY mix of one part bleach to 99 parts water is also helpful to deter the spread of virus on surfaces (do not use on upholstery).

Ask others to adhere to these protocols. Put signs in bathrooms. Have sanitizer available as well as disinfecting wipes.

### **LIMITS TO PHYSICAL INTERACTION**

This is harder than it seems. Do limit handshaking or close face contact when you can. When you do, wash hands immediately.

Avoid touching the face, particularly the mouth or mucous membranes such as around your nostrils or eyes. If you do, wash immediately. Also, practice these protocols at home.

Health departments are recommending “social distancing” to prevent the close contact that can spread the disease more easily.

### **CONTINUATION OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

Talk with senior staff and board immediately about business operations. If your organization experiences an outbreak of the virus, decide NOW what contingencies to put into place around your operations. Working remotely for a period of time could be a realistic event in the near future. Closures and quarantines are also possible.

Also, talk with your program staff about how to handle outbreaks with your clientele and what contingencies to put into place. These discussions should be happening this week, not when it first appears. Be prepared with a full plan in place.

Nonprofits may want to implement work-remotely days or virtual meetings to prevent the spread of disease.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS AND GALAS – POSSIBLE CANCELLATIONS**

Nonprofits may be looking at and should be prepared for potential cancellations of events in the next several weeks. If you have an event or gala scheduled, review your contracts with venues, caterers, etc., now to determine what actions might be necessary should you need to cancel an event (or if a venue cancels your event). Talk with your boards, event committees and chairs now about those possibilities. You should have “Force Majeure” contingencies in place to mitigate loss and risk.

### **INVESTMENTS**

The markets have had a beating the last few weeks. Talk with board members and finance chairs now about investment contingencies in the near term. The rockiness of the markets could continue for several more weeks.

### **LAST THOUGHTS**

Pay attention more to directions from the CDC, WHO and State and Local Health Departments. They will have the most up-to-date, realistic information and directions. Right now, our best defense is a good offense. You may want to err to the side of panic or to ignore. We recommend all nonprofits take this seriously and talk with staff, board and clientele about what to do.

Keep doing all the good you can.