

# Status Check

## A Reopening Guide for Community Associations

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**W**hen COVID-19 began to spread across the U.S., community associations established remote meetings, closed common areas and amenities, shared information, and connected neighbors who needed help.

As states lifted their stay-at-home orders and allowed businesses to begin operations again, community associations started deciding how and whether to reopen common areas and amenities. Board members, managers, and business partners asked: What approach should we take to reopening? How should we phase in operations? Do residents need to sign a liability waiver? Do we need to keep anything closed?

These questions and others like them continue even as the vaccine is being administered and more Americans are protected from the deadly virus.

Some of these questions are addressed in the following guidelines, which can and should be modified to each individual community. They include templates for:

- A letter to update residents about common areas and amenities
- Common area signage
- Guidelines for community association common areas, amenities, and operations

The common areas, amenities, and operations guidelines are organized by risk level or reopening phase, which are unique to each state, county, or city. In general, the high risk category would apply to the shutdown and stay-at-home phase, moderate risk to reopening phase one, low risk to phase two, and normal to phase three.

Adapt these guidelines based on the directives that apply to your community. You can find a summary of information developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that are relevant to community associations in CAI's [Healthy Communities](#) guide. CAI also continually tracks [local, state, and federal government actions](#) related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *Status Check* and *Healthy Communities* documents and the government actions can combine to offer community association board members and managers a more complete picture to addressing their questions and concerns regarding association operations. CAI strongly encourages board members and managers to consult with legal, insurance, health, and management experts before taking any actions.

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## CAI LEGISLATIVE AND ADVOCACY INITIATIVES RELATED TO COVID-19

SEE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS RELATED TO COVID-19 AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS [HERE](#)

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, CAI has monitored and advocated for certain COVID-19 related legislation that will aid community associations in recovery efforts across the country. Here is a summary of COVID-19-related advocacy priorities.

### COVID-19 LIMITED LIABILITY

CAI supports legislation that limits a community association's exposure to liability when acting in good faith and complying with local and state ordinances and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention related to opening or reopening community amenities and governing association operations. As of March 2021, 10 states have introduced legislation providing limited liability protections: Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia (extension), Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, Oregon, and South Carolina. Alabama and Indiana have already passed these pieces of legislation with the support of CAI's legislative action committees (LACs) and email campaigns. CAI's LACs will continue to pursue liability protections in states without existing laws. The following states passed laws in 2020 shielding community associations from lawsuits from residents and guests claiming COVID-19 exposure on association common property: Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah.

### VIRTUAL MEETINGS

CAI supports legislation that allows community association board meetings and annual meetings of the membership to be held virtually. These meeting rules and regulations vary from state to state and often are contingent on an association's governing documents. Many states require associations to follow a nonprofit or business corporation act. If an association's governing documents are silent on virtual meeting regulations, the nonprofit or business corporation act may allow an association to hold them. CAI supports an option for community associations to hold meetings virtually during and after the pandemic. While quite a few state statutes authorize board and annual meetings to be held virtually, many states will benefit from clarification and codification for permanent authority beyond the pandemic. As of March 2021, 13 states have introduced legislation that allow community associations to hold virtual meetings: Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Virginia already passed legislation this year amending the state's property owners association and condominium acts to permanently allow, not mandate, virtual membership meetings subject to guidelines adopted by the association board of directors.

### ELECTRONIC VOTING

CAI supports legislation that allows community associations to use electronic voting for elections. Electronic voting, if conducted properly, can increase engagement, save money, and provide a practical solution to in-person voting while keeping residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of March 2021, four states have introduced legislation allowing community associations to vote electronically: Hawaii, Maryland, Oregon, and Virginia. Virginia already passed legislation this year amending the state's property owners association and condominium acts to permanently allow, not mandate, electronic voting subject to guidelines adopted by the association board of directors.

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# SAMPLE LETTER TO UPDATE RESIDENTS ABOUT COMMON AREAS AND AMENITIES\*

DOWNLOAD CUSTOMIZABLE DOCUMENT AT [WWW.CAIONLINE.ORG/SAMPLEDOCSCOVID](http://WWW.CAIONLINE.ORG/SAMPLEDOCSCOVID)

Dear [Community Association Name] Residents,

It hasn't been easy, but we've all been working hard to stay healthy and get back to some sense of normalcy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The board is continually evaluating the status of association common areas, amenities, and operations with help from the association manager, attorney, insurance provider, and other business partners.

Based on the current reopening status and plans issued by the [state/county/city health department], our community will follow the risk schedule and operating plans in the [High/Moderate/Low/Normal] phase.

Please find the attached risk schedule and operating guidelines our association will follow during this phase. Please review them carefully and remember, the [insert state] plan includes provisions for different [counties/cities/communities] to be on different risk levels. It is not a one-size-fits-all model. Our association will follow the plans for our area.

These operating plans are subject to change based on government and health department directives, guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and advice from our professional partners.

These plans cover the actions the association is taking for common areas, playgrounds, clubhouses, pools, and more. They also cover the steps you are expected to follow when using these facilities.

## LIABILITY RELEASE & WAIVER\*

Although open, the use of association amenities and facilities still contains risks to you should you participate. Therefore, prior to use, you must electronically sign an association Release of Liability Related to COVID-19 document for yourself and your children (each adult must sign separately). Facilities with attendants will have paper copies available. You can electronically sign at [URL]. Owners who do not sign the release document will not be allowed access at this time.

## ASSOCIATION MEETINGS & EVENTS

Additionally, the association has [postponed/canceled] community events and meetings through [insert date]. Board meetings are now being held through [web-conferencing platform]. Owner meetings will continue to be postponed at least through the end of July and, thereafter, will be held through web-conferencing. [Insert information about any upcoming meetings here if desired.]

## SOCIAL DISTANCING & FACE COVERINGS

In-person interactions should be limited to individual households and those who have been following the recommended distancing and hygiene guidelines and in groups of 20 or fewer. Face coverings should be worn in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

The association will not and does not make any of the decisions mentioned above lightly. These actions are being taken to help protect the health and welfare of the residents of this community and in compliance with [insert state/county/city] directives. We recommend you bookmark and check frequently the [insert state/county/city coronavirus website].

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. Stay safe and healthy. Please contact our [board president/management/attorney] with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Community Association Name] Board

*This information is subject to change. It is published with the understanding that [Community Association Name] is not providing legal, accounting, medical, or other professional services or advice. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.*

\*Consult with your community association attorney.

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# WARNING

You must fill out a consent and release form **prior** to use of these facilities. Please keep a copy of the executed document on your cellphone to show the association.

**Use at your own risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other communicable viruses and diseases.**

By entering and using the facilities, you agree to take all responsibility for your own health and the health of your children and guests. The association makes no assurance regarding the cleanliness and sanitation of the facilities.

By using the facilities, you may become sick, contract COVID-19 virus, or infect others.

If you are ill or have any symptoms (fever, dry cough, body aches, chills, incontinence, shortness of breath), you may not access the facilities and may be asked to leave.

If you fail to follow extreme caution in social distancing and sanitation, you may be asked to leave.

While using the facilities:

- Disinfect your hands often with soap or sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face and touching others
- Wear a face mask as much as possible
- Maintain 6 feet of space between yourself and others
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- Disinfect and clean surfaces you touch

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## GUIDELINES FOR ALL COMMON AREAS AND INTERACTIONS

| SUGGESTIONS               | RISK LEVEL                      |                                 |                                                                       |              |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
|                           | HIGH                            | MODERATE                        | LOW                                                                   | NORMAL       |
| Precautions               | Extreme                         | Extreme                         | Reasonable                                                            | Reasonable   |
| Face-to-face interactions | Minimal, no more than 10 people | Minimal, no more than 20 people | Essential, no more than 50 people                                     | Normal       |
| Management operations     | Remote                          | Remote                          | Remote                                                                | Normal       |
| Face coverings            | Required at all times           | Required at all times           | Required during interactions that take place within a 6-foot distance | Not required |
| In-person meetings        | None                            | None                            | Limit                                                                 | OK           |
| Unnecessary travel        | None                            | None                            | Limit                                                                 | OK           |
| Distancing                | 6 feet                          | 6 feet                          | 6 feet                                                                | None         |
| Leaving home              | Infrequently                    | Infrequently                    | Normal                                                                | Normal       |

## GUIDELINES FOR PLAYGROUNDS

| SUGGESTIONS             | RISK LEVEL |          |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |
|-------------------------|------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | HIGH       | MODERATE | LOW                                                                               | NORMAL                                                                            |
| Status                  | Closed     | Closed   | May open                                                                          | Open                                                                              |
| Post signs              | Yes        | Yes      | Yes                                                                               | Yes                                                                               |
| Liability release form* | NA         | NA       | Required                                                                          | Required                                                                          |
| Personal responsibility | NA         | NA       | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days           | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days           |
| Equipment cleaning      | None       | None     | Association responsibility. Power-washed with disinfectant XXX times per day/week | Association responsibility. Power-washed with disinfectant XXX times per day/week |
| Use                     | None       | None     | At your own risk                                                                  | At your own risk                                                                  |
| Distancing              | NA         | 6 feet   | 6 feet                                                                            | None                                                                              |

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## GUIDELINES FOR CLUBHOUSES

| SUGGESTIONS             | RISK LEVEL |                                                                                              |                                                                                              |                                                                             |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | HIGH       | MODERATE                                                                                     | LOW                                                                                          | NORMAL                                                                      |
| Status                  | Closed     | May open                                                                                     | May open                                                                                     | Open                                                                        |
| Post signs              | Yes        | Yes                                                                                          | Yes                                                                                          | Yes                                                                         |
| Reservations            | NA         | Available for groups that are fewer than 20 people or equals one attendee per 36 square feet | Available for groups that are fewer than 50 people or equals one attendee per 36 square feet | Normal requirements                                                         |
| Reservation frequency   | NA         | One per day                                                                                  | At least two hours between reservations                                                      | Normal operations                                                           |
| Liability release form* | NA         | Required. Resident reserving facility must collect signed forms from all non-resident guests | Required. Resident reserving facility must collect signed forms from all non-resident guests | If required under normal circumstances                                      |
| Personal responsibility | NA         | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                      | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                      | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days     |
| Facility cleaning       | NA         | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use                  | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use                  | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use |
| Use                     | None       | At your own risk                                                                             | At your own risk                                                                             | At your own risk                                                            |
| Distancing              | NA         | 6 feet                                                                                       | 6 feet                                                                                       | 6 feet                                                                      |

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## GUIDELINES FOR POOLS AND HOT TUBS

| SUGGESTIONS                        | RISK LEVEL |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                      |                                                                             |
|------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                    | HIGH       | MODERATE                                                                                                             | LOW                                                                                                                  | NORMAL                                                                      |
| Status                             | Closed     | May open                                                                                                             | May open                                                                                                             | Open                                                                        |
| Post signs                         | Yes        | Yes                                                                                                                  | Yes                                                                                                                  | Yes                                                                         |
| Capacity                           | NA         | 50% capacity of posted bather load (maximum of 20 people)                                                            | 50% capacity of posted bather load (maximum of 50 people)                                                            | Normal                                                                      |
| Liability release form*            | NA         | Required                                                                                                             | Required                                                                                                             | If required under normal circumstances                                      |
| Personal responsibility            | NA         | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                                              | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                                              | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days     |
| Congregating on pool decks         | NA         | Prohibited                                                                                                           | Prohibited                                                                                                           | Normal operations                                                           |
| Residents/Guests                   | NA         | Residents only, no guests                                                                                            | Residents only, no guests                                                                                            | Restore previous guest policy                                               |
| Pool deck chairs, loungers, tables | NA         | None                                                                                                                 | None                                                                                                                 | Return to normal                                                            |
| Pool monitor                       | NA         | Hire to notify patrons of capacity and disinfect all rails, door knobs, gate handles and bathroom surfaces regularly | Hire to notify patrons of capacity and disinfect all rails, door knobs, gate handles and bathroom surfaces regularly | Hire if budgeted                                                            |
| Security                           | NA         | Hire if strict compliance is desired; pool monitor not expected to require compliance with rules                     | Hire if strict compliance is desired; pool monitor not expected to require compliance with rules                     | NA                                                                          |
| Facility cleaning                  | NA         | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use                                          | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use                                          | Attendees responsible to completely disinfect facility BEFORE and AFTER use |
| Use                                | None       | At your own risk                                                                                                     | At your own risk                                                                                                     | At your own risk                                                            |
| Distancing                         | NA         | 6 feet                                                                                                               | 6 feet                                                                                                               | None                                                                        |

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## GUIDELINES FOR SPORT COURTS—TENNIS, PICKLEBALL, BASKETBALL, ETC.

| SUGGESTIONS             | RISK LEVEL |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | HIGH       | MODERATE                                                                                         | LOW                                                                                              | NORMAL                                                                                           |
| Status                  | Closed     | May open                                                                                         | May open                                                                                         | Open                                                                                             |
| Post signs              | Yes        | Yes                                                                                              | Yes                                                                                              | Yes                                                                                              |
| Capacity                | NA         | Limit to one person per 120 square feet                                                          | Limit to one person per 120 square feet                                                          | Normal                                                                                           |
| Reservation frequency   | NA         | One per day                                                                                      | At least two hours between reservations                                                          | Normal operations                                                                                |
| Liability release form* | NA         | Required                                                                                         | Required                                                                                         | If required under normal circumstances                                                           |
| Personal responsibility | NA         | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                          | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                          | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                          |
| Cleaning                | NA         | Association provides supplies and encourages patrons to clean all equipment BEFORE and AFTER use | Association provides supplies and encourages patrons to clean all equipment BEFORE and AFTER use | Association provides supplies and encourages patrons to clean all equipment BEFORE and AFTER use |
| Cleaning supplies       | NA         | Close facility if supplies are limited and association cannot supply                             | Close facility if supplies are limited and association cannot supply                             | Instruct patrons to provide own supplies if association cannot supply                            |
| Use                     | None       | At your own risk                                                                                 | At your own risk                                                                                 | At your own risk                                                                                 |
| Distancing              | NA         | 10 feet                                                                                          | 10 feet                                                                                          | None                                                                                             |

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## GUIDELINES FOR FITNESS ROOMS/GYMS

| SUGGESTIONS             | RISK LEVEL |          |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                         | HIGH       | MODERATE | LOW                                                                                              | NORMAL                                                                                           |
| Status                  | Closed     | Closed   | May open                                                                                         | Open                                                                                             |
| Post signs              | Yes        | Yes      | Yes                                                                                              | Yes                                                                                              |
| Capacity                | NA         | NA       | Limit to one person per 120 square feet                                                          | Normal                                                                                           |
| Reservation frequency   | NA         | NA       | At least two hours between reservations                                                          | Normal operations                                                                                |
| Liability release form* | NA         | NA       | Required                                                                                         | If required under normal circumstances                                                           |
| Personal responsibility | NA         | NA       | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                          | Do not use if symptomatic or if exposed to COVID-19 within past 14 days                          |
| Cleaning                | NA         | NA       | Association provides supplies and encourages patrons to clean all equipment BEFORE and AFTER use | Association provides supplies and encourages patrons to clean all equipment BEFORE and AFTER use |
| Cleaning supplies       | NA         | NA       | Close facility if supplies are limited and association cannot supply                             | Instruct patrons to provide own supplies if association cannot supply                            |
| Use                     | None       | None     | At your own risk                                                                                 | At your own risk                                                                                 |
| Distancing              | NA         | NA       | 10 feet                                                                                          | None                                                                                             |

\*Consult with your community association attorney.

## GUIDELINES FOR ELEVATORS, COMMON RAILINGS, MAILBOX CLUSTERS, DUMPSTERS

| COMMON ELEMENT   | RISK LEVEL                             |                                        |                                   |                              |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                  | HIGH                                   | MODERATE                               | LOW                               | NORMAL                       |
| Elevators        | One rider at a time; disinfected daily | One rider at a time; disinfected daily | Face coverings; disinfected daily | Normal disinfecting schedule |
| Common railings  | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected weekly                | Normal disinfecting schedule |
| Mailbox clusters | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected weekly                | Normal disinfecting schedule |
| Dumpsters        | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected daily                      | Disinfected weekly                | Normal disinfecting schedule |

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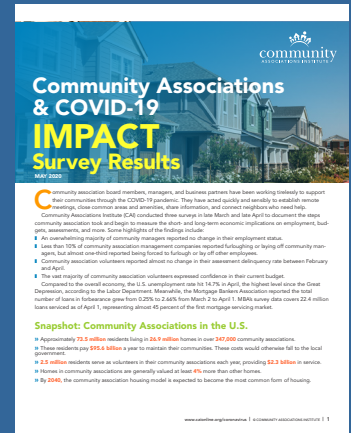
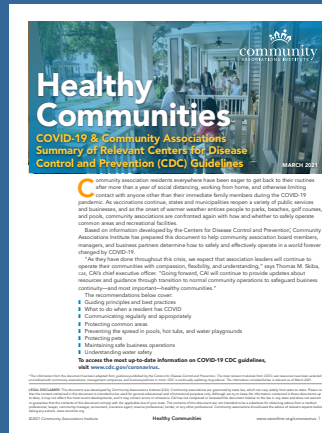
## POLICIES FOR EMPLOYEES, OFFICES, AND MEETINGS

| POLICY                                              | RISK LEVEL                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                            |                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                     | HIGH                                                                                                              | MODERATE                                                                                                                       | LOW                                                                                                                        | NORMAL                                                                              |
| Offices                                             | Closed to residents and nonessential employees                                                                    | Closed to residents and high-risk employees                                                                                    | Open                                                                                                                       | Open                                                                                |
| Remote work                                         | Preferred. When not possible, comply with distancing and hygiene guidelines                                       | Preferred. When not possible, comply with distancing and hygiene guidelines                                                    | Optional, as needed                                                                                                        | Optional, as needed                                                                 |
| In-office work                                      | Only if necessary for essential operations                                                                        | One day per week only for non-high risk employees; limited/rotating schedule; staggered shifts; minimized face-to-face contact | Two days per week for non-high risk employees; limited/rotating schedule; staggered shifts; minimized face-to-face contact | At least three days per week                                                        |
| In-office safety (if applicable)                    | Temperature check and log; symptoms check                                                                         | Temperature check and log; symptoms check                                                                                      | Temperature check and log; symptoms check                                                                                  | Optional                                                                            |
| Partitions and signs                                | NA                                                                                                                | NA                                                                                                                             | Partition installed between customer counters and employees; "stop" signs installed; floors marked with 6-foot distancing  | Optional                                                                            |
| Unnecessary travel                                  | None                                                                                                              | None                                                                                                                           | None                                                                                                                       | Optional                                                                            |
| Break rooms, conference rooms, meeting rooms        | Closed                                                                                                            | Closed                                                                                                                         | Closed                                                                                                                     | Reopened with stricter disinfecting                                                 |
| Employee meetings, conferences, workshops, training | In-person events canceled or postponed                                                                            | In-person events canceled or postponed                                                                                         | In-person events canceled or postponed                                                                                     | Optional                                                                            |
| Exposure                                            | Requires employees to self-quarantine for 14 days if symptomatic, exposed, or when returning from high-risk areas | Requires employees to self-quarantine for 14 days if symptomatic, exposed, or when returning from high-risk areas              | Requires employees to self-quarantine for 14 days if symptomatic, exposed, or when returning from high-risk areas          | Health monitored; time off encouraged when necessary                                |
| Association meetings                                | Video or teleconference only                                                                                      | Video or teleconference only                                                                                                   | Video or teleconference only                                                                                               | In person meetings may resume, but video or teleconference still encouraged/offered |
| Face coverings                                      | Required when face-to-face contact may occur                                                                      | Required when face-to-face contact may occur                                                                                   | Required when face-to-face contact may occur                                                                               | If desired                                                                          |

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# Coronavirus Resources

- Comprehensive list of federal and state government actions related to COVID-19
- Sample forms, templates, and infographics to share in your community
- FAQs regarding community associations and COVID-19
- Access these resources and more at [www.caionline.org/coronavirus](http://www.caionline.org/coronavirus).



Since 1973, Community Associations Institute (CAI) has been the leading provider of resources and information for homeowners, volunteer board leaders, professional managers, and business professionals in the nearly 350,000 community associations, condominiums, and co-ops in the United States and millions of communities worldwide. With nearly 45,000 members, CAI works in partnership with 36 legislative action committees and 64 affiliated chapters within the U.S., Canada, United Arab Emirates, and South Africa, as well as with housing leaders in several other countries including Australia, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom.

A global nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization, CAI is the foremost authority in community association management, governance, education, and advocacy. Our mission is to inspire professionalism, effective leadership, and responsible citizenship—ideals reflected in community associations that are preferred places to call home. Visit us at [www.caionline.org](http://www.caionline.org).

## ABOUT STATUS CHECK

This guide was adapted from one developed by Michael Johnson, CMCA, AMS, PCAM, chief executive of FCS Community Management, AAMC, in Draper, Utah. CAI thanks Michael for sharing his expertise and allowing us to repurpose his state-specific guide for the broader CAI audience.

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