

Status Check

A Reopening Guide for Community Associations

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When 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

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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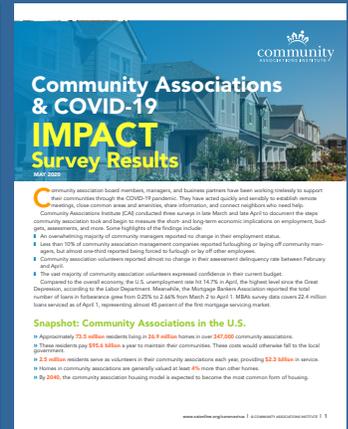
POLICIES FOR EMPLOYEES, OFFICES, AND MEETINGS

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.



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.

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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