



## COVID-19 Resources for Recovery Residences, Residents and Staff Members

March 10, 2020

Coping with, and staying safe from, the new coronavirus is a primary concern for most of us right now. NARR has reviewed recommendations about COVID-19 from many sources, and we are passing along the best of that information. Please share this with the individuals and organizations that you support. NARR and our state affiliates are here to offer support and information during this very difficult time. Together we can survive and thrive.

### Background

This virus is highly contagious. From the Centers for Disease Control: “The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). This occurs through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.” It can be transmitted by individuals who do not have symptoms and the virus can live on surfaces for up to three days. Your hands can pick up the virus from contaminated surfaces, and you can become infected if you then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without first washing your hands.

Symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Although symptoms are mild for many, the virus has caused thousands of deaths worldwide. Factors increasing risk of adverse or deadly reactions are age (over 70), compromised immune system, heart or lung disease, smoking/vaping, and other indicators of poor general health.

### Sources for accurate and helpful information

The **Centers for Disease Control** is a primary information source on COVID-19 and national developments. This [introductory page and topic index](#) leads to background on the virus and disease, informational posters, news updates, and information on protecting us and the people we serve.

The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** also has good material for residence providers and staff members beginning with this [overview page](#), and this [resources page](#) .

**SAMHSA's** [Tips For Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During An Infectious Disease Outbreak](#) includes reminders about maintaining emotional health and addressing fear, loneliness and other negative feelings that arise in these circumstances.

You should also review information provided by the **Department of Public Health** or equivalent agency in your state. County and city health departments may also have timely information about local resources, business closures, rules about events, etc.

Online meetings are being created everywhere in response to social distancing requirements, the closure of many meeting locations, and the cessation of other community activities. In addition to information provided by national recovery support fellowships and local recovery community

organizations, [InTheRooms.com](http://InTheRooms.com) is a directory of online meetings for many 12-step fellowships and other activities. Many of these meetings have existed for years, and new people are welcome to attend. The home page includes an always-current list of upcoming meetings with connection information. They also feature video meetings and a new section on coping with the coronavirus situation.

Several statewide NARR affiliate organizations have also produced guidance. An index to that material appears at the end of this document.

## Recommendations for residents and staff members

The following precautions are recommended by public health experts and are particularly relevant to individuals sharing living quarters or working in residential settings.

- Precautions are important not only for your own protection but also for the protection of those with whom you come in contact – many of whom are at elevated risk from this virus. You can become a carrier and transmit the disease to others without being aware that you have been exposed to the virus.
- Maintain a safe distance from others – six feet or more is recommended. Replace handshakes and hugs with other forms of greeting that do not involve person-to-person contact.
- Do not assume someone is virus-free just because they do not have symptoms. This virus has spread unchecked for many weeks, and we do not yet know how prevalent it is or which communities have high numbers of contagious individuals.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed/unsanitary hands to avoid transferring the virus to your nose, mouth or eyes and increasing the likelihood of infection.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly (at least 20 seconds) with soap and hot water when available. Do this as soon as possible after touching surfaces that could be contaminated.
- Use hand sanitizer if washing hands is impractical after touching surfaces that may have been contaminated. Check with your residence’s management before buying it for yourself since it contains alcohol and restrictions on possession may apply.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your elbow/sleeve if tissues are not available.
- If you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 call your doctor or health care provider, or a local public health resource if you do not have a doctor. Do not go to an emergency room or clinic for testing without having made prior arrangements. Doing so risks infecting others.
- Avoid crowds and events where safe distances cannot be maintained. Avoiding unnecessary interaction with others protects you, and it also ensures that you do not transmit the virus to others.
- Do not share dishes, cups, glassware or silverware with others. Follow residence procedures for cleaning those items promptly after use.
- Avoid inviting visitors to the residence. Secure the permission of your housemates and management before extending invitations.
- These circumstances are stressful and destabilizing. Self-care is vital, as is staying connected to your program of recovery. Public health precautions include increased physical separation, but that does not mean emotional and interpersonal isolation. Use your phone, text and email to stay connected to others. Skype, Facetime Google Hangouts/Duo, Zoom and other platforms provide connections to others through video chat. If your usual recovery groups are interrupted, seek out alternatives including online meetings.

## Recommendations for residence operators

Share these guidelines with residents. Ask them to help ensure their personal and household safety and health while supporting those who are having a tough time coming to grips with our new reality.

- Disinfect surfaces regularly. This is in addition to standard cleaning, and includes countertops, bathroom fixtures, faucets, doorknobs, railings, and any surfaces of equipment that are touched regularly.
- Ensure that you have appropriate cleaning and containment supplies including disinfectant materials, rubber gloves, facial tissues, etc.
- Have a supply of masks on hand in the event symptomatic or contagious residents need them. According to current guidance, masks need only be worn by individuals showing symptoms of infection. Masks will not prevent someone from contracting the virus.
- Use of hand sanitizing gel is a strong public health recommendation when someone can't wash hands with soap and water. Be aware that these contain alcohol.
- Residents exhibiting symptoms must contact their health care providers. Be sure you know how to connect residents to local medical services if they do not have a doctor or other medical resource of their own.
- Residents with symptoms should be isolated to the greatest extent possible. This may require temporary moves of residents into designated areas within the residence.
- It's easy for individuals to slip into old behavior. Consider posting informational messages in public places, [such as these offered by the CDC](#).
- While many 12-step and other mutual support activities are being cancelled, help residents identify suitable substitute activities including online meetings – a link to one good source is provided above.
- Residents who find it difficult to engage in outside activities, whether due to compromised immune systems, presence of COVID-19 symptoms, or just from fear can be assisted by other residents in connecting to new relationships and recovery activities and can assist in necessary day-to-day activities like shopping.
- Ensure that staff exhibiting symptoms or diagnosed as having COVID-19 do not report to work. Make contingency plans for how staff members' duties will be performed in their absence.
- Symptomatic or ill live-in peer leaders/managers should limit contact with other residents. Make contingency plans for how their duties will be performed during that time.
- Review your resident interview and acceptance process. It is unwise to admit individuals who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms or who have been diagnosed as carrying the virus.
- Restricted commercial activity is creating severe financial problems for providers and for residents. Research and be prepared to guide residents to resources including unemployment, SNAP, and any local programs that might provide financial relief.
- Monitor local news and public health sources for current information.
- For specific questions please contact your state NARR affiliate. You can find contact information on the NARR website.

### *About new residents*

Providers are addressing the potential risks arising from new residents in different ways. Some are not currently accepting new applications due either to staffing issues or from a desire to protect current residents. Others are welcoming new residents provided they are not exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Be

sensitive to the fact that our current circumstances are likely to drive many more people to seeking recovery, including many who do not have safe places to live. They are our brothers, sisters, parents, children and friends. They need our help too.

## Great advice from NARR state affiliate organizations, others

Several NARR affiliates have created information for the homes and residents they support. We've collected that information and made it available at the links below. You'll find suggestions here that may not appear above.

We will be adding to this section as we receive more good material, so check back periodically.

### ***Connecticut Alliance of Recovery Residences***

Tips collected from sources including Yale School of Medicine [[see it here](#)]

### ***Georgia Association of Recovery Residences***

Set of the most important personal health and safety tips [[see it here](#)]

### ***Faces & Voices of Recovery***

Good advice for the recovery community generally, with links to CDC and other authoritative sources of information [[see it here](#)]

***... more to come!***

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