

COMMUNITY GUIDANCE ON MANAGING THROUGH COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In the midst of a rapidly evolving situation, all of our communities and institutions are struggling to work through numerous issues and scenarios. This document is intended to provide guidance on decision-making factors for Federations and other Jewish organizations to use to determine how they can deal with the many day-to-day questions that are arising. JFNA is not a public health organization and we first and foremost encourage all organizations to adhere to the guidance from CDC and state and local public health agencies, especially as it relates to local conditions.

However, there are common questions that many are grappling with and we will try to consolidate as much as we can here:

1. Maintaining Operations in Your Facility

- Until such time as local health officials determine that offices, schools, and other facilities should not open, everyone should operate with appropriate cautions and sanitary procedures (well documented elsewhere). However, all organizations should be making preparations for enabling personnel to work remotely. A decision by local state or local governments can happen at any moment and everyone should be prepared to shift to that basis of operating.
- Those operating in densely populated areas where personnel rely on public transportation may consider staggering hours in order to enable public transit to be less crowded and reduce risk of transmission.
- Those who are able to work remotely more easily because of the nature of their work can be guided to shift to that now, again to reduce demand and density on public transit.
- Anyone who is feeling ill, whether the symptoms relate to COVID-19 or not, should be encouraged to stay home.
- Anyone who, because of age or health conditions, is more at risk of serious impact of COVID-19, should be permitted to work remotely if practicable.
- Everyone should be reviewing protocols related to approving work-related travel and considering limiting non-essential travel at this time.

2. Operating Community Programs (see also section below on vulnerable populations)

- Agencies conducting community programs that involve large groups of people, especially older adults, should consider shifting the basis of operation to work in smaller groups, or to

start preparing for alternative means of serving people. In particular, congregate meal programs may need to shift to home-delivered meals for some period of time.

- All of our national partners that relate to specific types of agencies are providing direct guidance to their affiliates, including the Jewish Community Centers Association, Prizmah, Hillel International, Association of Jewish Aging Services, Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies and Foundation for Jewish Camp. JFNA will aggregate and post these communications on our COVID-19 resources website.
- Schools and other educational program organizations should now be working to ensure they have a means of continuing their programs via distance -learning tools.
- Resources for Young Families - UJA Federation of New York is working with PJ Library, the Foundation for Jewish Camp and The Jewish Education Project to develop virtual informal education packets that can be accessed online to provide activities to engage children and youth. As soon as these are available JFNA will update our resource website:
<https://jewishfederations.org/jfna-coronavirus-resource-page>

3. Upcoming Community Programs and Trips

Many of us have been dealing with decisions related to group trips, events and conferences taking place in the next few weeks. Now it is time to look a few weeks and months ahead into April and through the spring, and potentially even summer. There is so much uncertainty that it is truly challenging to provide meaningful guidance. Every organization has to review its particular situation and gauge the risks of proceeding, the costs of cancelling, and options for rescheduling. In particular:

- Based on what we know and see now, we think it is highly unlikely that travel programs in April will be viable.
- Organizations should review their contracts for upcoming events (venues, catering, talent, AV, other) and make sure they have a clear understanding of cancellation dates that trigger increased costs. Negotiating the postponement of an event rather than the cancellation may help you arrive at an agreement with a vendor, who is also facing financial risks, to arrive at an approach that shares risk and hopefully maximizes the value of expenses you have already incurred.
- Organizations should check with local public health authorities for specific guidance about their particular area and how far out they should be considering curtailing public events. You may want to encourage local authorities to convene coalitions of religious leaders and other nonprofit leaders to think such issues through together.
- Questions that organizational leaders should be prepared to consider as they make decisions include:
 - What will be our sunk costs if we cancel?
 - Do we have the flexibility to reschedule an event or program to another time of year?
 - Are there ways of delivering our program “virtually” so people are still engaged and connected to our organization?

- In thinking about rescheduling, are there ways to collaborate with other community organizations in the same situation to manage what could become a very crowded community calendar in summer or fall?

4. Vulnerable Populations

JFNA convened several Federation planners to discuss ideas and best practices for how Federations and their agencies can best support vulnerable populations through this period, including seniors, home-bound individuals, those in quarantine, those whose income is compromised, and those with mental illness. Following are ideas that you may want to consider for your community:

- a. Seniors Programs - there is conflicting information around the ability to continue group programs at this time but it is conceivable that socialization and congregate meals programs may need to be suspended for some period. Several options that can be explored include:
 - Shifting to home-delivered meals
 - Mobilization of community volunteers for “drop and go” deliveries
 - Mobilization of program staff and volunteers to call isolated seniors for “virtual visitation”
 - Seniors and others who have medication needs may also need help arranging for delivery of prescriptions
- b. Income Challenges - community members may experience disruption to income, especially those dependent on part-time jobs in service industries. People who were marginally getting by may experience acute challenges. Federations may want to work with partner agencies to consider creating or expanding resources for cash assistance grants.
- c. Mental Health Issues - the current climate will likely exacerbate the stress of those dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues. Communities may need to bolster resources for telephone counseling to assist those in need.