

COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus: Guidance for Gardens (Interim v.3: March 13, 2020)

Scope:

This document provides a few key updates, resources, and suggestions for our Gardens and their Staff in facing the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are not meant to be binding. Considering the diverse membership we have – all, some, or very little of what is shared here may be applicable to your unique circumstance. However, we our observations show many commonalities in garden response that we believe will prove helpful in what is an always evolving and dynamic series of events.

Situation as of March 13, 2020:

- In the past 24 hours, several larger garden organizations have closed completely This is especially true in states such as PA, MD, OH, VA, and in the DC area where governing authorities have cancelled schools and large gatherings. These entities are sensitive to how they would effectively handle the expected large numbers of guests. In almost every case, these are about two-week closures (through the end of March). This follows suit with other building or enclosed facility-based cultural arts organizations such as museums, performing arts, and sports.
- However, the majority of our gardens are instead taking their cues from many parks and recreation organizations, dedicated to remaining open during these challenging times as a place for respite and have observed few impacts on visitation.
- Private event, classes, and other event cancellations and postponements are broadly observed regardless of institutional size. “Large gatherings of [more than 100-250+] people” is frequent language used. Gardens are urged that when dealing with contracted vendors they look closely for “force majeure” and other language present in their contracts that can be enforced to save some lost expense fees.
- Many Colleges and Universities and other organizations have implemented travel bans, and partial or total campus closures with a switch to online. The most stringent are bans on non-essential travel with no deadlines for re-evaluation and complete closures of their campus to outside visitors, combined with a transition to online learning for the remainder for the semester. Most common are those through mid-April and/or after their Spring breaks
- There are widespread travel bans to/from specific countries/regions where Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreaks are in pandemic phase (e.g. Europe (Except the UK), China, South Korea, Italy). Specific travel bans and travel advice/recommendations are available at [this CDC website](#).

- Temporary layoffs of personnel have been noted but often is coupled with some recourse wherever possible, especially for part-time employees. Many Volunteers/Docents Programs at gardens are suspended through March. There are excellent resources in the *Volunteers* as well as the *Finance and Operations* Professional Community on these topics
- Voluntary remote work arrangements for non-essential employees are being accommodated at several gardens.
- As was the case last week, it is again anticipated that over the next 5-7 days that many more confirmed cases in the US will be identified by State and Regional Health agencies as CDC test kits are distributed and used in the Eastern US.
- Over 117 Countries have COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus. The WHO has declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Overarching Considerations:

- All gardens must conform to mandates from their governing bodies and health authorities (local, regional, state, or federal). When a State of Emergency or Travel Ban is put in effect, these mandates not only dictate if/when a garden can be open but also trigger insurance coverage implications, travel bans imposed to, or by the garden organization, and other important matters related to events and business continuity.
- Please use our strengths in being science-based whenever you are able. With previous Coronavirus outbreaks, such as SARS and MERS, the onset of warmer weather brought a dramatic reduction in the number of cases for the duration of the spring, summer, and fall. While COVID-19 is a *novel* Coronavirus, it is following anticipated epidemiological models/predictions for worldwide outbreaks of this nature quite closely.
- The principles of good hygiene, such as handwashing, use of sanitizers, frequently cleaning and disinfecting facilities and recommending that people avoid contact with others when they are ill are - *evergreen* – and they should always be followed by our garden staff and volunteers
 - Several gardens have incorporated this wording successfully into their visitor information
- As primarily outdoor and/or open venues with ample fresh air to breathe, our gardens continue to be great places to go to find respite, solace, and peace at these uncertain times. We are great places to practice social distancing techniques and mindfulness! Please continue to be prepared, proactive, and positive in your responses and our gardens will shine.

Key Resources:

- MAP: [Worldwide Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by Johns Hopkins CSSE](#)
 - CDC: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - WHO: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
 - WHO: [Key planning recommendations for Mass Gatherings in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak \(Interim guidance\)](#)
 - SHRM: [Employment Law: Coronavirus information and facts](#)
 - AAM: [Coronavirus Resources and Information for the Museum Field](#)
 - AAMD: [Museums and COVID-19 \(has great leadership in times of crisis information\)](#)
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- Your own County or Regional Public Health Authority will have preparedness guidelines that are particularly useful for you to familiarize yourself with and/or distribute to your Staff/Volunteers. They will mirror what they are seeing from other local organizations such as Schools, etc.

The following pages contain sample statements to consider using for visitors, vendors, special events, or to Staff/Volunteers. They were developed after seeing dozens of examples of these statements by gardens, cultural arts venues, conventions and conferences, and peer Associations.

They are meant to be modified for your particular situation in response to ongoing questions and save you the effort of crafting your own from scratch.

Sample COVID-19 Coronavirus Statement #1 for gardens to direct to visitors on website and/or in social media:

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus:

Please be assured that we are monitoring the dynamic and evolving situation with regards to the COVID-19 novel Coronavirus and all its potential impacts. We are closely monitoring statements and guidance from **[insert governing authority, if relevant such as city or county,]** the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and **[insert all state and local relevant health agencies here]**. We are always focused providing the safest and most enjoyable experience for our guests.

[Optional, but discouraged: Statement about the extent of COVID-19 in your immediate area. This may be applicable if COVID-19 has not yet been detected in your area, but should be removed immediately if it is, which will be likely]

As a reminder, common cold and flu viruses are not unusual occurrences. Common-sense precautions are always recommended including hand-washing, proper hygiene and sanitizing. Monitoring your own health and being respectful of its potential impacts on others (e.g. postponing your visit to the garden so as not to expose others when you are not feeling well) are mindful principles that serve you and everyone.

We hope to see you visiting our garden and enjoying its many benefits.

Sample COVID-19 Coronavirus Statement 2 for gardens to direct to visitors on website and/or in social media:

We take the health of our visitors and staff very seriously. We are monitoring COVID-19 updates as well as taking all precautions to ensure a safe and healthy space for all to continue enjoying. We look forward to seeing you here.

Sample COVID-19 Coronavirus Statement 3 for gardens to direct to visitors on website and/or in social media:

As part of Coronavirus (COVID-19) response planning, the [Visitor Center, Restaurant, Conservatory, specific gardens, entire garden, etc.] are closed to the public until [Specific Date]. Our landscape remains open to the public to enjoy [or – we encourage you to get outside and appreciate plants and nature wherever you are able to. More information regarding our COVID-19 planning and updates can be found [here – insert link].

Sample Coronavirus Statement for Gardens to Staff and Volunteers:

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus:

We are monitoring the dynamic and evolving situation with regards to the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus pandemic and all its potential impacts. We are closely monitoring statements and guidance from [insert governing authority, if relevant such as city or county,] the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and [insert all state and local relevant health agencies here]. We are all always focused providing the safest and most enjoyable experience for our guests.

Your support of our efforts in this area are required:

Common cold and flu viruses are not unusual occurrences. Common-sense precautions are always recommended including hand-washing, proper hygiene and sanitizing.

Please keep your work areas and public areas of the garden where visitors congregate (such as visitor entrance areas, restrooms, gardens shops, restaurants) clean and inviting.

Please monitor your own health and be mindful of its potential impacts on others. Please stay home from the garden if you are not feeling well. This benefits you and everyone.

Please create an inviting experience to all who come to our garden. We are spaces that invite people of all backgrounds and should not ever single out or bias our behavior toward others. A welcoming smile is a gesture that is positively infectious.

Please pay close attention to statements coming from our garden and from our local government and health authorities. These statements, such as the declaration of States of Emergency, will impact garden operations and our status for receiving visitors and/or holding special events.

We are also concerned about your well-being and are asking you to [work from home, refrain from coming to work, or not work] until [date].