

SPOKANE HOUSING AUTHORITY

CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE PLAN MARCH 2020

The Spokane Housing Authority (SHA) is monitoring the current viral outbreak formally known as the novel coronavirus or COVID-19. This is a constantly changing situation, we are taking this very seriously and have developed a Response Plan should this health crisis impact our delivery of services to our residents and participants of our housing programs. There are many sources of factual information concerning the virus and can be found at these websites:

- Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov
- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov
- The World Health Organization: www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus
- Spokane Regional Health District: www.srhd.org

It is human nature during times like this to want to be overly cautious and react in a manner we feel is justified to protect ourselves and our families. We should be cautious and take prudent measures to protect ourselves, our residents, and those we work with every day. This plan provides guidance as to how the SHA can continue our work while be cautious and respectful of this serious health issue facing our community. Our goal will be to limit the exposure of the virus to our employees and residents and to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Effective March 16, 2020 at 4:00 PM the office will be closed to the public until further notice. Business will continue to be conducted via phone and email following the guidelines set below.

Chain of Command:

In the event the Executive Director is incapacitated or unavailable to perform their duties, the CFO/Deputy Director is hereby designated to act in their capacity during their absence. Should the CFO/Deputy Director be unable to perform these duties, the Controller is hereby designated to serve in this capacity. The person designated to act in the capacity during the absence of the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Chair and or Vice-Chair of the agency to inform them of the circumstances necessitating this change and maintain communication with the Board.

Communication:

The best efforts to combat a serious health issue like COVID-19 is to communicate clearly and effectively with employees, residents, government officials, vendors and the public. Accurate and timely communication will be critical in order to provide a proactive response rather than reactive. Use of multiple forms of communication will be important to spread the message as widely as possible to those who will rely on us now and in the future. This will include letters, emails, the SHA website and Facebook page, flyers, and when possible, text messaging.

A. Employees:

When it is necessary to communicate with staff the preferred method will be to call for a mandatory staff meeting to go over information and any course of action that may be required. If the situation calls for immediate notification, use of texting and emails will be used to get information to employees quickly. In the event there are changes in policies and procedures or there are work stoppages, this information shall be done in writing to remove any confusion or to limit misinterpretations.

Employees are advised to monitor their health and report any symptoms to the health care provider and local public health officials as necessary. If an employee believes they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home and monitor their situation while keeping SHA informed of their status. Employees must not be concerned with the status of their PTO account as we will work with the employees to ensure that they are paid while we manage this epidemic.

B. Residents/Participants:

The SHA currently serves over 7,000 households and therefore communication with them may be limited to letters, use of the website, and Facebook page. It will be important to provide our residents with helpful information that is reliable and effective. Written communication will include basic information about the virus, how to protect themselves, prevent the viruses spread and where they can find more information. They will be encouraged to contact health officials if they believe they have contracted the virus or are showing signs of the symptoms. Residents will be asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due to governmental action. We ask all of our residents and participants to continue to live their lives in a manner as normal as possible and to stay alert as the conditions change. We must all be prepared to respond in an appropriate manner and not panic or act in a frenzied manner that will not protect ourselves or others.

C. Vendors:

For our partners who work with us to provide goods and services, we will keep them informed via emails and/or phone calls of any changes to our work environment. If buildings or neighborhoods are quarantined, we will make them aware of the situation so that they may determine if they can or will provide services if needed. Emergency work items requiring immediate attention in an area of concern will be disclosed and a plan to deal with the emergency will be developed in a timely fashion subject to the nature of the emergency. For emergencies dealing with fire or police services, residents shall continue to use 911 services.

D. Government Officials:

The SHA will work closely with state and local officials to monitor the situation and report any known instances of the virus that have affected our staff or residents. We will cooperate fully with any request for information as health officials determine the status of the virus in our communities. If and when government decrees are issued, we will work to communicate these directives to our residents and staff. The Executive Director

or his/her designee of the SHA shall be the point of contact for all communication with public officials.

Incident Response:

In the event an employee or resident has contracted the virus, the Safety Committee shall immediately convene to develop a response. If contact with public health officials has not yet occurred, such contact will be made immediately. We will coordinate our response with them and ensure that our efforts do not duplicate or in anyway impede in their ability to respond to the incident. The Safety Committee working with public officials, will help to determine the source of the virus, take steps to ensure that the spread of the virus is halted or limited and make recommendations on how to proceed with our daily operations. The committee shall familiarize themselves with the current issues, identify resources to assist and recommend next steps. The Executive Director shall keep the Board of Commissioners informed at all times.

If it is necessary to cease operations of the SHA, we will communicate this via our website, emails and the media. Our phone lines will continue to operate and messages can be left which will be forwarded to staff who will monitor these messages.

Prevention Efforts:

The SHA will make reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus through commonly known personal practices and work practices. Information will be disseminated to staff and residents about coughing/sneezing etiquette, washing of hands, and staying home if you are sick. As a part of our normal janitorial services, we will make additional efforts to sanitize those areas frequented by staff and residents such as the lobbies, bathrooms, waiting room, meeting space and elevators. An emphasis will be made on those areas which come into frequent contact with hands. We will utilize appropriate disinfectants as identified by health officials.

The success of any prevention effort must rely upon the good judgement of individuals in our sphere of living. If an individual is sick, has symptoms or is known to have the virus, they must stay home and prevent the spread to others. Employees will be asked to stay at home, residents are asked to remain in their apartments and seek assistance from family members or others to provide for their basic necessities. If a State of Emergency is declared by an act of the government, we must all follow the instructions provided regardless of any inconveniences it may cause in our lives.

Operational Protocols:

Operational protocols are detailed in a separate "Coronavirus Processes" document.

Telework:

Working from home shall be encouraged for those employees who are sick or have been in contact with someone who has the virus. Whereas not all tasks required to perform the duties can be done at home, every effort will be made between employer and employee to identify work that can be done electronically from home. SHA shall provide computer access through a VPN connection in accordance with prescribed protocols established by the SHA IT Policy. In the event proper access cannot be granted due to security concerns or connectivity issues, other means such as emails and phones shall be utilized to the greatest extent feasible.

Maintenance obviously cannot be performed at home therefore maintenance staff shall be designated as standby if it is necessary to close the office for any period of time. Residents will continue to be asked to call into our emergency call line to report any issues requiring immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction). If it does not require immediate attention, a work order will be created and the item will be addressed as soon as staff is able. Any staff required to perform work at any of our properties may wear proper protection provided by SHA and utilize safe work practices at all times. We will communicate to our residents the need for patience as we work to continue to provide safe housing while protecting our employees and their families.

Travel & Training:

Until further notice, staff will not be allowed to travel for business, or attend offsite trainings. Arrangements previously made will be cancelled at the appropriate time.

Social Gatherings:

All SHA social functions shall be suspended or canceled until further notice. This includes all resident meetings and social activities on SHA properties. It is our intent to cooperate with containment efforts and to not expose our residents and their guests. Meetings that do occur will incorporate social distancing measures, including:

- Avoid physical contact with others, such as handshaking.
- Stay 6 feet away from others.
- Conduct your daily business as much as possible by phone, email or websites, or try to postpone non-essential business.