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Web Sites to Follow/Communicate With:
- World Health Organization (WHO): https://www.who.int/
- Center for Disease Control (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/
- US Travel Association (USTA): https://www.ustravel.org/
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS): https://www.hhs.gov/
- CDC Guides: Links
- Before a COVID-19 outbreak occurs: Plan
- During a COVID-19 outbreak: Act
- After a COVID-19 outbreak has ended: Follow Up
- Readiness Resources
- Your meeting destination Convention and Visitors Bureau
- The local municipality – city or county
- Your meeting Hotel or Convention Center or Venue

Information on COVID 19:
According to the CDC, there is an ongoing outbreak of respiratory illness that originated in Wuhan, China caused by a new type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). There are a number of cases globally including the United States. On February 26th, the CDC confirmed a possible instance of ‘community spread’ in the United States meaning it was spread without known contact to someone from the affected region. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing respiratory illness in people. Signs and symptoms, similar to the common cold or the flu, include a runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, and general feeling of being unwell. The current version of coronavirus is named COVID-19 both of which are often used interchangeably. According to the CDC, The risk of getting the coronavirus disease 2019 is currently low in the U.S. due in part to quick action from health authorities.

How It Spreads:
- The virus spreads mainly through person-to-person contact
- The virus is also thought to spread through aerosolized droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Additionally, the virus is expectedly able to be spread through contact with contaminated surfaces. This form of transmission requires the person to then touch their own nose, mouth and potentially eyes. SYMPTOMS Symptom’s of the 2019 (COVID-19) range in severity from mild to severe and in some cases result in death. Often showing similar signs and symptoms to Influenza (Flu), coronavirus is primarily a respiratory illness. Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Symptoms:
- Fever: *Fever may not be present in all cases
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting & diarrhea in some cases  *Fever may not be present in all cases

Prevention and Treatment:
Currently no vaccine exists for prevention of coronavirus infection. The only known definitive prevention measure is avoidance of exposure. The CDC recommends the following general respiratory disease spread precautions:
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Communication:
In the unlikely event of a confirmed case on-site of your event, ‘controlling the narrative’ e.g. social media, attendees, corporate, local news, is critical. Consider the following;
- Have a pre-established Crisis Communication Team identified?
- Control the Narrative.
- Advise staff to not post on social media or make any comments to the media.
- Determine what information (if any) is to be shared and on what platforms.
- Never share Personally Identifiable Patient Information.
- Collaborate with local emergency medical services on next steps.

Conference Communication:
Below is a listing of items for consideration if you proceed with your event (this is not absolute but lists items many are doing or have discussed during this unprecedented time).
- Place an “OFFICIAL STATEMENT” on your web site. Please keep this updated as your progress.
  Sample:
  
  ConferenceDirect is planning to proceed with all of our internal meetings and events. We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation daily and will adjust based on additional feedback from the meeting destination and venue.

  • Publish on any information that is being distributed directions to go to the company’s web site for more updated information. Suggested language is “Safety and Health are the primary concerns please go to XXXXXXX.org for the most updated information”
  • Keep your web site updated with current information
Post Attendee Communication if Incident

First Email

The American Conservative Union has learned that one of our CPAC attendees has unfortunately tested positive today for coronavirus. The exposure occurred previous to the conference. A New Jersey hospital tested the person, and CDC confirmed the positive result. The individual is under the care of medical professionals in the state of New Jersey, and has been quarantined.

ACU has been in contact with the Health Department of the State of Maryland, and we will explicitly follow guidance from government health experts.

This attendee had no interaction with the President or the Vice President, and never attended the events in the hall.

The health and safety of our attendees and participants is our priority. Any attendee can contact ACU at CPAC@ACU.org, and we will make sure to keep you informed.

Our children, spouses, extended family, and friends attended CPAC. During this time, we remain close to health care professional, and support each other. We send this message in that spirit.

Second Email

We continue to work closely with the Maryland Department of Health since our conference was in the State of Maryland.

The Dept of Health has screened thousands of employees from the Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center and the Residence Inn.

The Dept of Health has however encouraged these employees to take their temperature twice a day and to keep an eye open for any unusual symptoms.

We think that is good advice and encourage our attendees and participants to do the same.

If you are exhibiting symptoms, you should immediately contact your local Department of Health.

Pre Attendee Communication Sample: Example on Conference Web Site

Question – What is the status of the TBA
Safety is a core value of the TBA and as such the health and well-being of our members, staff and the public is paramount. For that reason, TBA has decided that it is inadvisable, and impractical, to TBA and it has therefore terminated it in light of our growing safety concerns for our attendees and the City of TBA.

Question – Why was a decision made to terminate the meeting?
The decision was based on several factors, including, but not limited to:
• The Governor of the Commonwealth of TBA signed an emergency disaster declaration and several COVID-19 cases have now been reported in the greater TBA area.
• Input from city officials and continued review of recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other governmental bodies.
• Input from our members who were increasingly concerned with travel and the large gathering in TBA.

• Watching the expanding trajectory of the virus, using tools such as the Johns Hopkins Center for Systems Science and Engineering COVID-19 tracking tool to monitor the increasing trajectory of COVID-19 domestically and globally.

Question – Where can I get up-to-date information related to actions being implemented related to the cancellation of the meeting?
Please visit the TBA web site for updates.

Question – Will my fees (registration, special events, etc.) be refunded? When?
Yes, your fees will be refunded. We are presently working on how to do this most efficiently. You will receive more information from TBA about this soon. We ask for your patience and cooperation as we process the large volume of refunds that need to be made.

Please check the TBA for latest updates.

Question – Will TBA help with fees associated with the cancellation of my travel and hotel reservations?
It is up to the individual attendee to confirm cancellation with their hotel booked with the housing block. Please contact your hotel to confirm cancellation. TBA will not be able to help with fees associated with housing arranged outside of the housing block. Please contact your provider directly.

As to travel, most transportation providers have made special provisions to address COVID-19 related issues. Please contact your transportation provider directly.

Question – I am an exhibitor – what happens to the fees I paid?
Please contact Karen Miller at TBA for your options for a refund or an opportunity to move your exhibit to a future meeting.

Question – I was scheduled to give a talk in TBA – what happens to my abstract? Can I withdraw it? Can I withdraw and submit for TBA in TBA or another meeting?
TBA understands that the dissemination of the scientific record is critically important. To ensure that record, TBA is working with our technical divisions to provide alternate means for research to be shared. Details will be forthcoming.

Question – I already withdrew my abstract – can I take advantage of the options being developed for sharing my research?
No, you will be contacted directly with information about your options.

Question – Our group wants to hold its session as planned, can we move forward?
Given the uncertain nature of the situation and the rapidly expanding COVID-19 outbreak, we would not recommend holding any in-person gatherings. We would encourage you to explore virtual options for your activities.

Question – What about other upcoming TBA meetings? will they be cancelled?
As of now, no decisions have been made regarding other upcoming TBA meetings.

Looking forward, we will rely on the same criteria and input from our attendees and participants to do the same.

We think that is good advice and encourage our attendees and participants to do the same.

If you are exhibiting symptoms, you should immediately contact your local Department of Health.
• **Guidelines for Meetings:**
  - Initiate a No Hugs, No Kissing, No Handshaking Policy during this time period of your Meeting or gathering.
  - Remind attendees that social distancing is good practice of 6’.
  - Remind attendees not to travel if they are sick or not feeling well.
  - Masks – Consider making available for attendees that might feel compromised.
  - Ensure that you have attendees current contact information i.e. phone, text, email and mailing address for purposes of communicating to attendee pre, onsite and post event.
  - Keep log with name, date, time, phone #, and e-mail of the person so you are logging anyone sick and can check back with them in a few weeks to ensure their well-being and if they are not well that you have record of when the person was interacting with others at your event.
  - Notify all attendees of safe health practices.
  - Areas for Communication to be Posted:
    - At Registration desk
    - On Back side of Badges
    - As flyer, postcard, or handout that can be folded or placed into back of badges
    - Additional Signage
    - Verbally communicated as part of speakers housekeeping notes
  - Consider hiring medical professional to attend event. As an example, you could have a local health provider conduct wellness checks on each attendee before they enter the meeting space. If a person has a high temperature, they could be denied entry into the conference.
  - Offer disposable gloves to attendees that wish to wear them or use them – this could be new Branding Opportunity or Possible New Sponsorship Opportunity
  - Require staff to wear disposable gloves
  - Publish how often surfaces inside the hotel/convention center will be wiped down with Clorox each day during the event.
  - Check state and local websites for any new updates pertaining to meetings.

• **Venue Considerations/Discussions:**
  - Be pro-active renegotiate and document requests related to attrition, performance, reservation cancellation fees and F&B minimums contracted.
  - Require Hotel to outline in writing the extra or additional new measures that have been put in place that are new in comparisons to the standard operating procedures they were previously operating under.
  - Review and confirm the hotel crisis guidelines with Hotel/Venue prior to meeting and again at Hotel Pre-Con.
  - Consider requiring Hotel to wipe down and sterilize or clean with proper disinfectant cleaner any surfaces or places where attendees are frequently touching to include door knobs, chair tops, elevator buttons, escalator railings, bathroom doors, the tops of any garbage cans or garbage can and recycling bin openings, bathroom vanity tops, bathroom faucets, bathroom flush levers, paper towel holders, changing tables, etc
  - Have venue increase the number of hand sanitizers available, and consider hand sanitation stations at the entrance to each meeting room, at front desk, in lobby, foyer spaces, etc.
  - Wash Hands regularly with soap and water.
  - Ask hotels to ensure warmer water is flowing and to set faucets accordingly.
  - Ensure the soap being used at hotel or convention center is proven as effective disinfectant.
  - Have venue increase the number of hand sanitizers available, and consider hand sanitation stations at the entrance to each meeting room, at front desk, in lobby, foyer spaces, etc.
  - Ask hotels to ensure warmer water is flowing and to set faucets accordingly.
  - Ensure the soap being used at hotel or convention center is proven as effective disinfectant.
  - Require staff to wear disposable gloves, at a minimum mandate all hotel banquet servers where gloves at all functions where food service is occurring, with documentation of proper training on how to avoid contamination of food being served.
• **Meeting Rooms:**
  o Meeting Room Sets:
    ▪ Set 2 per six-foot versus 3 per six-foot
    ▪ 60” rounds set with six or seven chairs versus 8 or more
    ▪ 66” rounds set with no more than seven to eight
    ▪ 72” rounds set no more than seven to eight
    ▪ If setting theater style allow extra space between chairs versus having all chairs butt up against each other
  o Stagger session end times so that attendees can be spread out at lunch.
  o Water stations should only use push bar dispensing water coolers.
  o Exhibit Halls/Tradeshows:
    ▪ Aisles should be set wider and flow of traffic should go one way per aisle.
  o Have hotel staff open & close all meeting room doors while wearing gloves as guests arrive/depart

• **Food & Beverage:**
  o When selecting banquet breaks think about only offering packaged wrapped food items.
  o Offer on-site or on breaks EmergenC, Airborne, vitamin C
  o Stagger session end times so that attendees can be spread out at lunch.
  o Water stations should only use push bar dispensing water coolers.
  o Can you change the way you provide food and beverage services to attendees? This may include serving individually wrapped products (this will increase waste, but given the circumstances, this may be the right decision).
  o When selecting banquet breaks think about only offering packaged wrapped food items.
  o Suggest not doing buffets but do plated meals. Instead, suggest stations where trained attendants serve food them
  o Add additional bartenders to minimize lines for bars.

• **Front Desk and Sleeping rooms:**
  o Place marks for people to stand 6’ part when waiting in front desk line to check in.
  o Add more staff at front desk and an additional temporary terminal to minimize lines
  o Do not offer room keys if hotel has an app for electronic keys.
  o Staff should be continuously cleaning public areas as well as elevator buttons.
  o Stand up self-dispensing sanitizers should be placed next to elevator doors.
  o Sleeping room door handles to be cleaned and sanitized as housekeepers are cleaning rooms.
  o Remove throw pillows, decorative throws and bed runner
  o Place luggage stand as close to door as possible so bags can be put up right away
  o Add hand sanitizer in bathrooms.
  o Apply Visqueen on main traffic areas in sleeping rooms- side of bed, bathroom floor, next to toilet and shower.
  o Provide extra towels in sleeping room
  o Plastic bags offered in rooms for use to cover remote controls in guestrooms (television remotes and other remotes)
• Considerations of CANCELLATION of your EVENT
  o Consult with your Individual Legal Counsel to get legal advice and options on proceeding or cancelling event.
  o As of 3/12/20 – Per USTA there are no restrictions on travel anywhere within the United States.
  o Hotel companies thus far are enforcing full cancellation penalties per contract / Hotels open to negotiating cancellation fees for rebooking’s / Hotels may be open to lowering attrition and F&B minimums for customers that will still perform their event.
  o Depending on severity of outbreak the local jurisdiction or local public health officials may ask / require you to modify, cancel, or postpone large events
  o Look at your Hotel Contract and be aware contractually of your liabilities
  o Cancelations – here is a partial listing of events that have cancelled so far
    https://www.barrons.com/articles/coronavirus-is-forcing-companies-to-cancel-conferences-51583147701
  o Important to note SXSW - Austin (City of Austin cancelled the event not the Group organizers) – this then caused other event cancellations as the city has noted “Events larger than 2,500 people (This is for the next 7 days only) are prohibited unless organizers can assure Austin Public Health that mitigation plans for infectious diseases are in place”
    ▪ Please go to http://www.austintexas.gov/COVID19 for more details
  o San Francisco bans events for two weeks in public facilities
  o Events DC is shutting down their facilities for two weeks to conduct a deep clean
  o Governors of Oregon and California recommend not gathering with more than 250 people
  o Capitol Hill announces restrictions applying to all tours — public, staff-led and member-led

• Other Considerations
  o Airline Industry: Be aware of travel restrictions and airline cancellation policies.
  o What about your Sub Contractors (decorator companies, AV and Production Companies, Scripting, Registration Companies and other Vendors that support your convention?)