

COVID-19 Questions



The real estate industry is considered an essential service. While activities are continuing during the COVID-19 crisis, realtors should take precautions to protect themselves and their clients. This guidance is taken from the National Association of Realtors and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What unique issues does coronavirus present to the real estate industry?

When an infectious disease, such as coronavirus, is associated with a specific population or nationality, fear and anxiety may lead to social stigma and potential discrimination. REALTORS® must be mindful of their obligations under the Fair Housing Act, and have a duty not to discriminate against any segment of the population.

May I ask clients or others I interact with in my real estate business if they have traveled recently, or have any signs of respiratory illness?

Yes, you may ask clients or others about their recent travel, particularly to areas identified as having an increased risk of coronavirus. To avoid potential fair housing issues ask all clients the same screening questions based on current, factual information from public health authorities.

However, at this time there has been evidence of community spread of COVID-19 in North Carolina; so it is better to assume that you or your clients may be carrying COVID-19, and act accordingly, which means practicing social distancing and limiting unnecessary contact.

I typically drive my clients to showings. May I refuse to drive potential clients to see homes?

Yes. It is recommended you stop driving clients in your car altogether and arrange to meet clients at a property. If you implement this policy, you must implement it for all clients to avoid any Fair Housing issues.

What precautions should brokers consider taking in their offices?

Because community spread is the primary method of spreading COVID-19, and infected individuals may be asymptomatic for several days before becoming sick, it is advised that realtors close their offices to the public and operate remotely and by appointment.

Brokers should take measures to hold virtual meetings when possible, and potentially postpone or cancel in-person meetings or events to limit close contact between individuals.

What steps should I take when showing a house to a client?

For the safety of the realtor and clients, please exercise the following precautions when practical:

- Everyone involved in the showing, including the realtor, should follow CDC guidance and wear a mask, regardless of their age or current health status. If someone refuses to wear a mask, they should not be allowed inside the property.
- Everyone should wash their hands with soap and warm water or use hand sanitizer before entering the property and after exiting.
- Designate one person to open all doors, closets, cabinets, etc., to limit exposure, and limit touching of doors, windows, etc., as much as possible.



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- Practice social distancing during the showing--keep at least six feet away from each other at all times.
- After the showing, the realtor should wipe down all door knobs, cabinets, etc., that were touched with an alcohol wipe to prepare for the next showing.
- If the property is not owner-occupied, leave all doors open.
- Limit the number of people allowed in the house at any one time so that social distancing guidelines can be followed.
- Consider the option of a "virtual showing," which would mean the realtor does the walk through while on video chat with the clients.

Brokers should implement a mandatory "stay-home" policy for staff members or agents exhibiting any sign of illness. They should follow the CDC's self-quarantine guidelines.

Monitor updates from the CDC, state and local health authorities for additional information and guidance on holding meetings or events. For travel considerations, review NAR's "*Coronavirus: A Guide for REALTOR® Associations.*"

Finally, do not panic. Stay informed and use your best judgment. The situation is rapidly changing, so focus on putting policies and procedures in place to keep your employees and agents informed and safe. The CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers is a helpful resource.



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