

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for House Offices

Sending Office: Office of the Sergeant At Arms
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TO: All Members of Congress and Staff

FROM: Paul D. Irving
Sergeant at Arms

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SUBJECT: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for House Offices

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has garnered a substantial amount of national media attention in recent weeks. Please know that the Office of the Attending Physician (OAP) and the House Sergeant at Arms (HSAA) continue to monitor the situation closely and will keep the House community apprised of any changes to the situation.

There are several steps you should take to prevent the spread of germs. The OAP and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provide the following guidance on best practices that you, your staff, and your visitors can take to minimize the spread of respiratory illnesses, such as the COVID-19 virus:

Practical Prevention Techniques

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- 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 wipes.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Vaccinations - Stay up to date on vaccinations, including the influenza vaccine.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Maintain at least six feet of distance from anyone exhibiting obvious symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.

Face Masks

- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. As a practical matter, if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, you should not be reporting to work and should seek appropriate medical attention.

For more information, please visit the [OAP](#) and [CDC](#)'s websites.

Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planning

Although we do not have current indications of widespread infections in the United States, your office should consider continuity of operations (COOP) planning in the event of a widespread outbreak. A COOP plan allows your office to consider the actions and resources needed to continue to operate in the event of an emergency. The SAA Emergency Management Division has prepared COOP templates which are available at <https://housenet.house.gov/campus/emergency-preparedness/emergency-planning-resources>. The Sergeant at Arms Emergency Management Division is prepared to assist offices in COOP planning. They can be contacted at 202-226-0950 or at SAEEMD@mail.house.gov

Who can I talk to if I need additional support?

Fear, anxiety, and grief are among common reactions before, during, and after an emergency. Stress can be particularly difficult for staff who are helping constituents and dealing with their own concerns. Do not hesitate to contact the Office of Employee Assistance at 866-831-0038 or 202-225-2400 for support.

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