

# **vhfa Affordable homes for a sustainable Vermont**

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DATE: March 12, 2020  
TO: Owners/Managers of Properties with VHFA Funding  
FROM: Asset Management & Compliance Department  
RE: Interim Guidance on COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

SUMMARY: To minimize the health risks for building occupants, property managers should monitor guidance about COVID-19 and provide up to date information for their tenants and staff.

## **Good sources of accurate information include:**

- [Vermont Department of Health](#),
- The federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), and
- The [Institute of Real Estate Management](#) (IREM).

## **Inform tenants about prevention measures:**

- Property managers should take some commonsense steps to help prevent spread of the virus at their place of work and at their properties. Those steps include:
  - Wash hands regularly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
  - Avoid touching of eyes, nose, and mouth with hands.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Stay home if you are exhibiting cold or flu-like symptoms or feel sick.
  - Cover mouth and nose with the inside of the arm or with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue away immediately. Wash hands as soon as possible afterward.
- IREM has prepared fact sheet templates to inform tenants how they may help prevent the spread of infection.

## **Encourage employees and residents to stay at home when sick, and travel safely**

- Ensure employees are aware of sick leave policies.
- Inform residents about ways to communicate with management (phone, e-mail, mail) instead of office visits.

- Evaluate need for travel and provide safe travel information, such as the CDC's Travelers Health Notices.

### **Perform additional cleaning of office work-spaces and public access areas**

- Ensure repeatedly touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, counter-tops and doorknobs are cleaned thoroughly and frequently.
- Provide employees with cleaning products and encourage routine cleaning. See the CDC's guidance on effective cleaning and disinfecting products.
- Make sure soap and hand sanitizer are available in rest rooms, kitchen and other high traffic areas.
- Consider increasing outside air intake to the building to promote higher amounts of fresh air, or other similar measures as appropriate for property HVAC systems.

### **Plan for emergency or alternative office operations**

- Prepare a continuity/emergency operations plan for your business if you don't already have one in place. Make sure employees have reviewed and understand the plan.
- Prepare to conduct some in-person transactions (such as lease renewals, recertifications, rent payments, work orders) by phone, e-mail, or other alternative methods.

### **Use screening questions to determine if planned appointments should be rescheduled**

- If residents or staff answer yes to any of the following questions prior to an in-person meeting or in-unit non-emergency maintenance request, reschedule the appointment (or attempt to conduct in an alternative way)
  - I have traveled to an area where COVID-19 is spreading within the past 14 days.
  - I have been in close contact with people who have traveled to areas where COVID-19 is spreading within the past 14 days.
  - I have been around people who are sick with colds or flu.
  - I have symptoms of a cold.

- I have a fever or have had a fever within the past week.
- I have been nauseated or have vomited or had diarrhea within the past week.
- VHFA staff may use these same screening questions in order to determine whether to reschedule on-site visits, inspections or reviews in upcoming weeks.
- VHFA will postpone inspections or site visits for properties with active cases, or as recommended by public health officials.

**Who to call?**

- If you have questions about COVID-19: Dial 2-1-1
- If you are returning from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea or Japan: Call Health Department Epidemiology at 802-863-7240
- If you are ill, have symptoms, or concerned about your health: Call your health care provider

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