Attn: CSA Presidents; CSA Presidents-elect; Central Office Coordinators/Executive Directors; CSA Meeting Planners

AHIMA is committed to providing our CSAs with the appropriate tools and resources to respond to the growing concern on the increased reported cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the US. As you plan your annual meetings, we recommend referencing resources from industry organizations and health professionals such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) listed below.

As of March 5, 2020, we are recommending Component State Associations (CSAs) hosting meetings in the Spring keep the health and safety of all participants, including attendees, speakers, and staff, a top priority. For that reason, we recommend the following precautions be taken:

Onsite

- A “handshake-free” meeting.
- Hand sanitation sites will be available in public areas, providing alcohol-based hand sanitizer for all attendees and staff.
- Disposable, disinfectant wipes will be provided so commonly used surfaces (e.g. laptop, presentation materials, tables, etc.) can be routinely wiped down by staff.

Pre-Event Guidance

As of today, COVID-19 infections are not widespread; however, it is a good time to remember some common-sense precautions. Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following:

- **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-95% alcohol.
- **Cover your mouth** and nose when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or using your upper sleeve, not your hands. Dispose of tissues promptly.
- **Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms** of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.
- **Avoid touching** your face.
- **Stay home if you are unwell.** If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.
- **Follow the directions of your local health authorities.** Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- **Keep your work environment clean,** using basic cleaning and disinfecting products. Viruses and bacteria can live on surfaces for a number of days and depends on the nature of the organism and its environment. Temperature, humidity, and the type of surface are the most important factors that affect how long they survive. To be safe, cleaning work surfaces will help prevent infections.

**Recommendations for CSA Meeting Planners**
CSA staff are expected to actively monitor CDC, WHO, and State Department of Health updates for further information. We also recommend the following:

- Provide printed copies of the CDC’s safety measures related to COVID-19 to all attendees at registration.
- Advise attendees to stay away from the event if they feel ill. If they become ill at the event, they should not stay at the meeting.
- Promote appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette at the meeting.
- Make sure soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers and tissues are easily accessible.
- Crowding should be minimized where possible. For example, try minimizing congregation at sanitary stations, food and water distribution, and registration.
- Consider recommending that members refrain from shaking hands to prevent infection spread.
- Consider ways of making content available to attendees who may not be able to attend.
- Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority.

PCMA (known as the Professional Convention Management Association) recommended that event organizers[1]:
- Review contracts to determine whether there is any provision which may excuse the group’s performance based on COVID-19.
- Check your event cancellation insurance policies.
- Examine communications to meeting attendees, exhibitors, vendors, and other stakeholders.

For more information visit:

- Associations Now: How to keep your association running if Coronavirus worsens
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention fact sheets
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Interim Guidance: Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Meeting Planning Resources: What Business Events Professionals Need to Know About the COVID-19 Coronavirus
- North Star Meetings Group: Coronavirus Resources
- World Health Organization Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak

We are planning a webinar soon to address the impact of COVID-19 is having on health information and advice for HIM professionals as they support their organizations.

Thank you for your commitment to communicating regularly with attendees about the status of your event. AHIMA will continue to share guidance with our CSA leaders as it is available.

Sincerely,

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