

Georgia Congregate Settings - General Reopening Guidance

This document serves as a general guide regarding reopening settings such as senior centers, adult day, adult health centers, support groups, and others. It is not intended to replace legal guidance or regional planning, and centers should refer to their local health department for additional information.

I. When to Reopen

1) In partnership with the CDC, the White House Released [Opening Up America Again](#), to guide reopening via a 3-phase approach.

Phase 1: All vulnerable individuals should continue to shelter in place; non-vulnerable persons should limit non-essential travel and prohibit gathering of more than 10 persons.

Phase 2: All vulnerable individuals should continue to shelter in place; non-vulnerable persons may cautiously restart non-essential travel and prohibit gatherings of more than 50 persons.

Phase 3: Vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions, but should practice social distancing, minimizing exposure to social settings where distancing may not be practical, unless precautionary measures are observed.

According to these guidelines, congregate settings could reopen in Phase 3. Consult with your [local health department](#) to determine when your region reaches Phase 3. Proposed criteria for proceeding from each phase were recommended, including:

- **Symptoms:** Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses **and** downward trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases within a 14-day period
- **Cases:** Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period **or** downward trajectory of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests)
- **Hospitals:** Treating all patients without crisis care **and** having robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody testing

2) The CDC has also provided a [Workplace Reopening Decision Tool](#) to aid in determining when to reopen

II. Tasks Prior to Reopening

1) Establish what model your centers will follow. For senior centers, options available include: traditional, collaborative-style (satellite), and center without walls. Descriptions of each model can be found DAS MAN 5300, Ch. 206: Senior Center Requirements. During this time, it is highly recommended that AAAs explore the centers without walls model or a combination of models, which could include limited traditional model services for eligible participants and also include virtual programming. Virtual programming options can be found in the Virtual Models for Georgia Senior Centers guide (**Appendix 1**).

2) Determine staffing needs for the congregate setting

Staff refers to paid employees and volunteers

- Employees who can telework without service interruption should be encouraged to do so
- If employees need to physically come to the building, consider:
 - How many clients will you expect to serve daily?
 - What is the staffing level needed to serve the expected clientele?

- What will the altered schedule look like? (Will the center be open 5 days per week?)
- Will the congregate meal be served in shifts and if yes, how many meal shifts will there be?
- How will the altered schedule be shared with the clientele?
- How will you handle the staff shortage if an employee becomes ill?
- Determine staff needed based on program schedule.
 - Congregate Meals: Food can be held for up to 4 hours after final preparation. Arrange meal times to fit that time frame, if multiple meals are to be offered. Example:
 - 1st meal time: 11 am-noon
 - 2nd meal time: 1-2pm
 - Programming (crafts, recreation, education):
 - Be creative with programming and be sensitive to needs of current population (i.e. Offering stress-relieving activities, creative ways to exercise while social distancing and preventing heavy breathing, etc.)

3) Create a plan to keep staff and clients safe

Because senior and adult day centers serve meals, they are somewhat similar to restaurant settings. Read the CDC [Considerations for Restaurants and Bars](#), which offers guidance on Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread including:

- **Staying home when sick or in contact with someone sick**
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - CDC recommends requiring all staff and clients to use cloth face covering. Centers should provide information regarding proper use, removal, and washing of these face coverings.
 - Per the CDC:
 - *Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:*
 - *Babies and children younger than 2 years old*
 - *Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious*
 - *Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance*
 - This includes individuals with cognitive impairment or intellectual disability
 - *Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators, or personal protective equipment.*
- **Adequate Supplies**
 - Individuals may wear their own cloth face masks from home, but the center should be prepared to offer all staff and clients at least 1 cloth mask/day
 - Per the CDC: *Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed on every table, if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.*

- **Signs and Messages**
 - Centers should post signs in highly visible locations (entrances, restrooms)
 - Example signage:
 - [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)
 - [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
 - [Hand Washing Posters](#) (scroll to bottom of page)
 - [How to Properly Wear and Take Off a Cloth Face Covering](#)
 - [What You Can do if You are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19](#)
- **Additional topics covered in the guidance include:**
 - Shared objects
 - Ventilation
 - Water Systems
 - Modified Layouts and Procedures
 - Physical Barriers and Guides
 - Communal Spaces
- The guidance also contains important information regarding Maintaining Healthy Environments, Maintaining Healthy Operations, and Preparing for Sick Employees

4) Cleaning. Prior to reopening, senior center buildings should be cleaned according to the CDC's [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection](#).

- Clean surfaces after they have been used by individuals (example if congregate meal is served, disinfect surfaces prior to next serving time and then at the end of the day). Attention should be paid to high-touch surfaces (tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.).
- The CDC site offers a link to a database [EPA-approved surface cleaners for use against COVID-19](#). DAS does not endorse specific brands or products; some common items on the list include:
 - Clorox Bleach (diluted according to instructions)
 - Clorox Multi Surface Cleaner + Bleach
 - Clorox Disinfecting Wipes
 - Fantastik® All-Purpose Cleaner
 - Lysol® Brand Heavy Duty Cleaner Disinfectant Concentrate
 - Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes (All Scents)
 - Lysol® Bathroom Cleaner
 - Rely+On Multipurpose Disinfectant Cleaner
 - Scrubbing Bubbles® Bubbly Bleach Gel Toilet Bowl Disinfectant
- If reopening a building that has not been in operation for long, follow the CDC [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#)

5) Rearrange center for social distancing

- Measure 6 feet between seating and common places (front doors, recreation rooms)
- Use helpful markings (stickers, signs) to denote proper spacing
- Determine how many people your center can accommodate with social distancing (consider staff and clients)

6) Determine Transportation services

- Encourage clients to provide their own safe transportation to the center
- When using DHS Transportation, reach out to your regional transit officer to consider how many individuals can be transported per vehicle
 - The DHS Coordinated Transportation system is practicing COVID-19 prevention measures, including social distancing to the extent possible on vans. Center managers should coordinate transportation schedules with the Regional Transportation Office to coincide with center programming.
 - Establish transportation “shifts” to sense when passengers will be picked up and dropped off in accordance with the meal programming schedule
 - Refer to the CDC’s Guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles](#)

7) Have a plan for what do to if a staff or client becomes ill

- Have a list of local testing locations in a format that can be provided to clients
- Have a draft letter to notify individuals if a staff member/client becomes infected (**Appendix 2**) and/or if client services need to change (**Appendix 3**).
- Create a plan with your local health department regarding contact tracing, etc.
- At a minimum, any staff should immediately notify their supervisor and the local health department if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. The health department will provide guidance on what actions need to be taken.
- Other resources regarding employees can be found on the CDC’s [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#) page

III. Resuming Programming

1) Alert staff and clients

- Senior center employees and clients should be provided with information *prior* to returning to explain what to expect when operations resume

2) Requirements of staff and clients

- Staff and clients are expected to:
 - Abide by social distancing
 - Wear cloth masks
 - Centers should update Employee Policies and their “Client Rights and Responsibilities” form to include required COVID-19 measures (sample language: “Client is required to wear cloth masks when not eating/drinking and is expected to follow all COVID-19 protocols including screening, hygiene, and social distancing.) Updated policies and client responsibilities should be distributed to or available to clients prior to re-opening if possible
 - Staff and clients should also be required to ensure their current emergency contact on record is correct

3) Screening staff and clients

According to the CDC's [General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#) page, *Screening employees is an optional strategy that employers may use.* If you choose to conduct screening, all laws concerning protecting employee and client privacy must be followed. Consult with your local health department for guidance. Options for screening include:

- **Inquiring about symptoms**
 - Have staff/clients complete a survey upon arrival.
 - Staff/clients can be shown a list of [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#) and asked:
 - Are you currently experiencing any of these symptoms?
 - Have you experienced any of these symptoms in the past 48 hours?
In the last 21 days?
 - Have you tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Have you been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
- **Temperature Scans**
 - Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher is a symptom of COVID-19; Current CDC guidance encourages but does not mandate temperature checking staff and clients
 - Any record or log of temperatures must be treated as confidential medical information.
 - Temperature scans may not be feasible in centers with limited staffing.
 - If temperature checking staff and clients, a center must 1) have properly trained individuals doing so, 2) have a plan to keep individual's privacy safe, and 3) have a plan regarding what to do if an individual's temperature is outside the designated range
 - Staff should be clear that screening is not intended to be, nor is it a substitute for, a clinical diagnosis
- **Waiver:** Centers can utilize a waiver notifying the client that the center is taking precautions but ultimately the client attends at his or her own risk. Centers and Area Agencies on Aging should consult their legal representatives to develop any such forms.

4) Meal Service

- Arrange meal service and tables to promote social distancing practice
- Utilize a reservation system
- Limit sharing of utensils
- Avoid buffet-style self-serving methods
- Continue adherence to ServSafe food safety guidelines
- For more information: Read the FDA's [Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

5) Additional Considerations

- Be sensitive to clients who lost a loved one to COVID-19; they may require more accommodating programming
- Consider that some previous congregate meal clients may have had declines in their functional ability

IV. References

- 1) The White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Opening up America Again*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>
- 2) National Association of County and City Health Officials. *Directory of Local Health Departments*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory?searchType=standard&lhd-state=GA#card-filter>
- 3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Workplace Decision Tool*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-community/organizations/workplace-decision-tool.html>
- 4) Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services. *ODIS MAN 5300, Chapter 206: Senior Center Requirements*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://odis.dhs.ga.gov/General/Home/DhsManuals/1>
- 5) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Considerations for Restaurants and Bars*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/business-employers/bars-restaurants.html>
- 6) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *How to Protect Yourself and Others*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention-H.pdf>
- 7) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Stop the Spread of Germs*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs-11x17-en.pdf>
- 8) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Posters - Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>
- 9) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *How to Safely Wear and Take Off a Cloth Face Covering*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf>
- 10) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *What You Can do if You are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness from COVID-19*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-What-You-Can-Do-High-Risk.pdf>
- 11) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/cleaning-disinfecting-decision-tool.html>
- 12) United States Environmental Protection Agency. *List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

13) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>

14) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

15) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *General Business Frequently Asked Questions*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html#Healthy-Business-Operations>

16) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Symptoms of Coronavirus*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fsymptoms.html

17) U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. 2020. Accessed June 18, 2020, via web: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/best-practices-retail-food-stores-restaurants-and-food-pick-updelivery-services-during-covid-19>

V. Appendices

Appendix 1: Virtual Models for Georgia Senior Center Services

Appendix 2: Client Letter Template - Senior Center Attendee Positive for COVID-19

Appendix 3: Client Letter Template – Change of Senior Center Services COVID-19

Virtual Models for Georgia Senior Center Services

Events in 2020 highlighted the need for centers to utilize virtual programming. This document serves as a general guide for planning and implementation of virtual options and should be used in combination with local guidance. DAS does not endorse any specific platforms; those listed here are some of the most common tools.

I. Background:

- Per Georgia ODIS Mann 5300, chapter 206¹, senior centers function within three models: traditional, collaborative, and center without walls.
- At a minimum, in addition to a meal/meal voucher, all centers must provide:
 - 1 hour per day of planned wellness/social activities
 - 15 minutes nutrition education per month
- To meet these requirements, virtual programming can be utilized across all models.

II. What is virtual programming?

- Virtual programming refers to services that are delivered using computer, phone, mail, and other formats when all parties are not able to meet in the same location at the same time.

III. How do I start a virtual program?

1) Determine your audience:

- Individual
- Group
- Public (example: a public website, in which non-center participants can also view the material posted)

2) Determine the type of programming you want to offer:

- Nutrition education
- Recreation/exercise
- Educational content
- Entertainment
- Arts/crafts
- Other – example: an open phone line for individuals to chat

3) Determine which format works best for you:

Consider what equipment your center has, what equipment your clients have, and which methods offer the amount of privacy needed

- **Computer/tablet (email, video calls)**
 - Individual/group settings:

- Apple Facetime
 - Skype
 - Google Hangout Video
 - Public settings:
 - Youtube
 - AAA/senior center website
- **Telephone**
 - Staff/volunteers for a telephone reassurance program
 - Phone tree/buddy system, in which clients call each other
 - Conference call line (Skype, freeconferencecalls.com)
 - Conference call lines can be used to provide:
 - an open line for individuals to chat casually while dining
 - an education session
 - A recreation session (at-home exercise programs)
- **Public television**
 - Local networks may allow air time for programming
- **Radio**
 - Like television, radio stations may allow air time for programming
- **Mail/Delivery with meal** (handouts, newsletters, activity packs)
 - Activity packs can include crosswords, supplies to make masks, games
 - Senior center staff/volunteers can write letters to participants

4) Determine the resources needed

- Equipment – computer, phone, etc. depending on format chosen above
- Internet access, if using online formats
 - Internet in client’s home
 - Parking lot “wifi” - if able to drive, participants go to common area (library, senior center) to utilize open wifi connection
 - mobile hotspots

5) Assign staff to develop and lead programming

- Most programs can be run with 1-2 staff
- If possible, have one staff lead the program and other staff manage technical issues

6) Create a programming schedule

- Do you want recurring sessions? ex. Bingo every Monday 1-2pm
- Can you use the schedule you were previously using in the center?

7) Provide instructions to tell clients how to access the virtual material

- Deliver via mail, email, with meal, or phone call

8) Have a plan for troubleshooting

- Provide a phone number for clients to call if they run into access issues
- Assign staff or volunteers to be available during programming times to assist with technical issues (if possible, use staff who are not leading the programming)

IV. Solutions to common challenges:

1) My clients don't have access to computers or internet.

- Utilize telephone, mail, or delivery of materials with meal

2) My clients only have limited minutes on their phone.

- Toll-free conference line subscriptions are available. One option is <https://www.freeconferencecall.com/toll-free>
- If a toll-free line is not preferred, allow the client to keep phone conversations short and use other formats (local radio, tv, mail, etc)

3) My senior center staff have never done virtual programming before.

- Start small with something staff feel comfortable using. One easy option is to have the center staff set up a phone line for 1 hour each day and allow individuals to chat. The senior center staff can provide prompts like:
 - What's everyone's favorite activity in spring/summer/fall/winter?
 - What has been the biggest up/down of this week?

4) My clients may not feel comfortable using virtual options.

- Utilize a format that fits your population. Phone is a great way to connect and most feel comfortable with it.
- Repurpose volunteers; if they previously delivered meals but are unable to currently do so, ask if they would be willing to help provide basic technical assistance or call clients to check in
- Be cautious not to stereotype. According to a recent study³:
 - ~2/3 of older adults use the internet
 - ~3/4 of internet users go online every day

IV. Examples of Current Virtual Programming:

- Set aside a time to host a game of bingo and assign staff to lead. Send bingo cards home with the meal, along with a letter containing options to join a conference call by computer or phone
- Create a Youtube channel for your AAA/Senior Center and post videos related to exercise, health tips, education, etc. Send the link to the Youtube channel home on a document via mail or with a meal.

V. Resources for pre-made programming to help clients stay connected

- **Well Connected** is an online/phone platform that offers a catalog of classes, museum tours, etc for older adults to choose from <https://covia.org/services/well-connected/>
- **Georgia Radio Reading Service** is an organization offering a library of books, news, and other programs: <https://garrs.org/>
- National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging: Summary for **Nutrition Programs Targeted at Older Adults**: https://media2-production.mightynetworks.com/asset/11001225/Nutrition_Education_Programs_for_Older_Adults_Summary.pdf

VI. References

- 1) Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services. ODIS MANN 5300, Chapter 206: Senior Center Requirements. 2020. Accessed via web: <https://odis.dhs.ga.gov/General/Home/DhsManuals/1>
- 2) National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging. The New Normal Way to Offer Key Nutrition Sources. May 19, 2020. Accessed via web: <https://nutritionandaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NRCNA-May-19-New-Normal-Webinar-Final.pdf>
- 3) Stanford Center on Longevity. Older Adults and Technology: Moving Beyond the Stereotypes. April 13, 2019. Accessed via web: <http://longevity.stanford.edu/2019/05/30/older-adults-and-technology-moving-beyond-the-stereotypes/>

[Agency Heading/Logo]
[Date]
[Client Name]
Client Street Address
City, State Zip code]

Dear **[Client]**,

We are writing to inform you that a member of the **[insert center name]** has tested positive for the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). We do not wish to alarm you, but rather are writing to inform of the occurrence and to encourage you to follow all necessary precautions to prevent spread of the disease. Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath¹; if you exhibit any of these symptoms, seek medical advice. Further recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control include the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Stay home when you are sick

[Insert center name] is working closely with the Public Health Department. In situations of a public health crisis, the Public Health Department can ask for the assistance of organizations like ours in tracking contagions; and according to federal law and the Notice of Privacy Practices that you received when you joined the center, we must comply. The names and contact information for all center members who have been at this location at or around the same time as the individual who has tested positive have been provided to public health officials. The Public Health Department may also ask for limited health information, such as which participants might have an underlying respiratory health condition that may make that person more susceptible to this virus. Your personal information was not made public; it was only shared with authorized public health officials. As mentioned above, please monitor your own symptoms. If you hear from the Public Health Department, please cooperate as necessary to protect the safety of this entire community.

To prevent further spread of the illness, the **[insert center name]** will be closed until **[insert date]**. If you currently receive meals from our center, efforts will be taken to ensure alternate options are available.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as our staff follow all precautions to prioritize safety of our staff and clients. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **[888-888-8888]**. To learn more about COVID-19, you can visit the Centers for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/COVID19.

Sincerely,
[Insert name]
[Insert Title]

¹ [1] Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). (2020, March 2). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

[Agency Heading/Logo]

[Date]

[Client Name]

Client Street Address

City, State Zip code]

Dear **[Client]**,

Due to circumstances surrounding the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), we are writing to inform you that the **[insert center name]** will need to suspend congregate meals until **[insert date]**.

To assure you still receive nutrition services, our center has elected to:

- Provide shelf-stable meals at the **[insert center name]** available for you to pick up
- Deliver shelf-stable meals to your home address on file

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as our staff follows all precautions to prevent spread of the disease. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **[888-888-8888]**.

To learn more about COVID-19, you can visit the Centers for Disease Control website at

www.cdc.gov/COVID19.

Sincerely,

[Insert name]

[Insert Title]