COVID-19:
Guidance for Faith-Based and Community-Based Organizations

Adapted from CDC and CDPH Guidance

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, community-based and faith-based organizations (CBOs and FBOs) can play a crucial role in promoting community health and safety and offering comfort to those affected by the disease directly and indirectly.

The Alameda County Department of Public Health (ACPHD) supports the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendations for disease mitigation in our communities, as well as the California Department of Public Health recommendations. As of 3/13/20, Alameda County recommends that our senior centers and faith-based congregations deploy strategies for reducing community transmission. Recommendations include:

- **Modify, scale back, cancel, or postpone group activities** and events to support “social distancing.” Discuss how these actions will impact your organization and those you serve. Refer to current ACPHD Guidance on Mass Gatherings.
  - Cancel non-essential large gatherings (>250 people) or move to smaller groups (e.g., religious services and community outreach programs). Consider smaller groups, or offer video, audio, or online access to events.
  - For services or organizations that serve high-risk groups, limit group size to less than 10. Those most at risk of severe disease include older adults and those with chronic health conditions.
  - Smaller gatherings should allow for people to be spaced at least six feet apart
  - Encourage people to stay home when sick

- **Determine ways to continue providing support services to individuals at increased risk of severe disease**—including services, meals, checking in—while limiting group settings and exposures.
  - Educate staff and volunteers about how to keep themselves healthy when providing essential services or support to others. For example, help staff and volunteers traveling with a client to a medical appointment, worship service, or government office by having tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer on hand.
  - Clean common areas more frequently, using regular cleaners.

- **Communicate with and update key community partners and stakeholders frequently.** Share information about how your organization is responding to the outbreak. Provide information that explains why and when on-site operations and services may be temporarily scaled back or your organization may be closed to non-essential visitors.

- **Distribute health messages and materials** to staff, volunteers, and the community. Faith groups and CBOs can serve as trusted ambassadors to disseminate key public health messages.
health messages in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. Address the potential fear and anxiety that may result from rumors or misinformation. See Managing Emotional Health During Uncertain Times (Alameda County Behavioral Health, 3/6/20).

Other Considerations

- **Stay informed about local conditions**, including school closures that may affect many staff, volunteers, or participants in your programs.
- **Continue to promote everyday preventive actions** (e.g., stay home when sick, cover coughs and sneezes, and wash hands often).
- **Provide COVID-prevention supplies to staff, volunteers, and those you serve.** Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles) using a regular household cleaner and water.
- **Address the concerns of staff and volunteers who are at high risk** for COVID-19 complications. Implement flexible attendance and sick-leave policies (if possible) due to COVID-19.

Additional Resources: