

# GALENA HOUSING AUTHORITY CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE PLAN MARCH 2020

**Introduction:** The Galena Housing Authority is monitoring the current viral outbreak formally known as the Coronavirus or COVID 19. This is a constantly changing situation, we are taking this very seriously and have developed a Response Plan should this health crisis impact our delivery of services to our residents.

There are many sources of factual information concerning the virus and can be found at these websites:

The Center for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The Kansas Department of Health: <http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/index.htm>

The World Health Organization: [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

The National Institutes of Health: [www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus](http://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus)

We will be cautious and take prudent measures to protect ourselves, our residents and those we work with every day. This plan provides guidance as to how GHA can continue our work while be cautious and respectful of this serious health issue facing our community.

Our goal will be to limit the exposure of the virus to our employees and residents and to prevent the further spread of the virus. Effective March 18, 2020 the office will be closed to the public. Business will continue to be conducted via phone and e-mail.

**Communication:** The best efforts to combat a serious health issue like COVID-19 is to communicate clearly and effectively with employees, residents, government officials, vendors and the public. Accurate and timely communication will be critical in order to provide a proactive response rather than reactive. Use of multiple forms of communication will be important to spread the message as widely as possible to those who will rely on us now and in the future. This will include letters, emails, the GHA website, flyers, and our Facebook page.

- A. Employees:** When it is necessary to communicate with staff the preferred method will be to call for a mandatory staff meeting to go over information and any course of action that may be required. If the situation calls for immediate notification, use of texting and emails will be used to get information to employees quickly. In the event there are changes in policies and procedures or there are work stoppages, this information shall be done in writing to remove any confusion or to limit misinterpretations. Areas that may need to be addressed:

- B. Protocols** for completing work orders in resident's homes; - Responding to emergency calls; - Inspections; - New lease ups; - Use of outside vendors; Employees are advised to monitor their health and report any symptoms to the health care provider and local public health officials as necessary. If an employee believes they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home and monitor their situation while keeping the GHA informed of their status. Employees must not be concerned with the status of their Earned Benefit Time account as we will work with the employees to ensure that they are paid while we manage this epidemic.
- C. Residents/Participants:** The GHA currently serves 40 households and therefore communication with them may be limited to letters, use of the website and Facebook page. It will be important to provide our residents with helpful information that is reliable and effective. Written communication will include basic information about the virus, how to protect themselves, prevent the viruses spread and where they can find more information. They will be encouraged to contact health officials if they believe they have contracted the virus or are showing signs of the symptoms Residents will be asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due to governmental action. We ask all of our residents and participants to continue to live their lives in a manner as normal as possible and to stay alert as the conditions change. We must all be prepared to respond in an appropriate manner and not panic or act in a frenzied manner that will not protect ourselves or others.
- D. Vendors:** For our partners who work with us to provide goods and services, we will keep them informed via emails and/or phone calls in any changes to our work environment. If buildings or neighborhoods are quarantined, we will make them aware of the situation so that they may determine if they can or will provide services if needed. Emergency work items requiring immediate attention in an area of concern will be disclosed and a plan to deal with the emergency will be developed in a timely fashion subject to the nature of the emergency. For emergencies dealing with fire or police services, residents shall continue to use 911 services.
- E. Government Officials:** The GHA will work closely with state and local officials to monitor the situation and report any known instances of the virus that have affected our staff or residents. We will cooperate fully with any request for information as health officials determine the status of the virus in our communities. If and when government decrees are issued, we will work to communicate these directives to our residents and staff. The Executive Director GHA shall be the point of contact for all communication with public officials.
- F. Incident Response:** In the event an employee or resident has contracted the virus, the Cherokee County Health Department along with City of Galena officials shall immediately convene to develop a response. If contact with public health officials has

not yet occurred, such contact will be made immediately. We will coordinate our response with them and ensure that our efforts do not duplicate or in any way impede in their ability to respond to the incident. GHA working with public officials, will help to determine the source of the virus, take steps to ensure that the spread of the virus is halted or limited and make recommendations on how to proceed with our daily operations. The Executive Director shall familiarize themselves with the current issues, identify resources to assist and recommend next steps. The Executive Director shall keep the Board of Commissioners informed at all times. Decisions as to cease operations or limit operations shall be at the direction of the Board of Commissioners. If it is recommended that the office be closed, the Executive Director shall provide a plan as to how we will continue to provide services under such conditions. If it is necessary to cease operations of the GHA, we will communicate this via our website, emails and the media. Our phone lines will continue to operate, and messages can be left which will be forwarded to staff who will monitor these messages.

- G. Prevention Efforts:** The GHA will make reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus through commonly known personal practices and work practices. Information will be disseminated to staff and residents about coughing/sneezing etiquette, washing of hands and staying home if you are sick. As a part of our normal janitorial services, we will make additional efforts to sanitize those areas frequented by staff and residents such as the lobbies, bathrooms, waiting room, and meeting space. An emphasis will be made on those areas which come into frequent contact with hands. We will utilize appropriate disinfectants as identified by health officials and whenever possible use green cleaning products which serve as a qualified disinfectant. The success of any prevention effort must rely upon the good judgement of individuals in our sphere of living. If an individual is sick, has symptoms or is known to have the virus, they must stay home and prevent the spread to others. Employees will be asked to stay at home, residents are asked to remain in their apartments and seek assistance from family members or others to provide for their basic necessities. If a State of Emergency is declared by an act of the government, we must all follow the instructions provided regardless of any inconveniences it may cause in our lives. It is important to self-quarantine if you possibly have the virus as communities across the nation are considering legal action against those that knowingly spread the virus to others.
- H. Operational Protocols:** Leasing: In the event that service delivery is curtailed due to community health concerns, GHA shall endeavor to assist our clients to the extent feasible through electronic or written means (mail). Applications can be downloaded from the GHA website: [www.ghaks.org](http://www.ghaks.org) and emailed to [chad@ghaks.org](mailto:chad@ghaks.org).
- I. Property Management.** Leases will be sent electronically or by mail followed up with phone conversations to review the lease and other pertinent documents. Showing of units will be done in person if possible. In the event a lock down is ordered by the government, if possible, pictures will be taken and sent electronically to potential

renters. Move in/move outs inspections will be waived during any lock down or if staff is unavailable. If a move out inspection cannot occur, security deposits shall be returned minus any unpaid rent. Lease enforcement will continue to the extent complaints can be followed up via emails, texts or phone calls. GHA shall continue to comply with state and federal regulations as it relates to the enforcement of lease provisions.

- J. Occupancy Issues: Program eligibility; Annual/interim Recertifications:** GHA shall continue to process program eligibility and recerts subject to staffing and further regulatory guidance. Whereas income verifications are subject to third party review, processing of eligibility/recertifications may be delayed and or suspended until such time conditions will allow.
- K. Inspections:** In order to comply with virus containment protocols, inspections may continue if conditions allow. Conditions which may affect inspections include but are not limited to availability of staff; additional regulatory guidance; known conditions of occupants of the units to be inspected (GHA will not allow inspection of units where a known COVID-19 case exists.) and government restrictions.
- L. Maintenance:** GHA will use extreme caution when required to perform work in common areas and individual units. If sick, personnel will be asked to remain home and refrain from performing any work on behalf of GHA. If residents are infected by the virus, work will be limited to emergency work orders only and will take additional measures to protect themselves from exposure. This includes use of proper protective clothing, respirators, gloves, face masks and other protective gear as needed. Increased attention will be made to cleaning and disinfecting areas with heavy pedestrian traffic and surfaces which come into frequent contact of humans. Door will be clean at least once per day, subject to staffing availability. The office will be covered by office staff at the end of each business day. Maintenance shall take stock of inventory to ensure adequate supplies are in place should there be a disruption of the supply chain. This should include adequate cleaning supplies as well as any material or equipment necessary for the safe operation of our facilities.
- M. Financial:** Our objective during this crisis shall be to continue to receive and make payments for good and services provided and or delivered. Residents are expected to continue to make rent payments in a timely fashion. We request that during this crisis, payments be made via the drop box located at the front door of the Administrative Offices. Payment envelopes are now available in a box located above the drop box. We will continue to accept payments in person at the office until such time as the GHA is required to cease operations or determines that it is best to discontinue direct payments. Under no circumstances should cash be mailed to make payments.

- N. Revenue:** Staff, to the extent possible, shall make every effort to record revenues received and process deposits as needed. Should the GHA be hampered in its ability to collect and record payments, no action will be made upon any household for non-payment of rent. Until such time as mail delivery is suspended, we will regularly check our mailbox to receive and record payments.
- O. Resident Actions:** All residents are encouraged to take appropriate measures to have sufficient food and supplies on hand in the event that a quarantine is instituted. Residents will continue to be asked to call into our emergency call line to report any issues requiring immediate attention. If it does not require immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction), a work order will be created as the item addressed as soon as staff is able. Any staff required to perform work at any of our properties shall wear proper protection provided by GHA and utilize safe work practices at all times. We will communicate to our residents the need for patience as we work to continue to provide safe housing while protecting our employees and their families.
- P. Travel & Training:** The GHA shall rely upon the decisions made by government officials and or sponsors of the training to determine whether or not travel will continue. Should a ban be enacted that restricts travel and gatherings of large groups, we shall follow these bans accordingly. In the event that trainings are not canceled but staff have decided it is in their best interest to forgo travel, the GHA shall respect their wishes and seek reimbursement of any fees paid. If travel and training has been scheduled in an area which is quarantined or restricted, GHA shall prohibit travel to these areas.
- Q. Social Gatherings:** If the incident of cases involving COVID-19 expand causing concern for public health, all GHA social functions shall be suspended and or canceled. This would include all meetings and social activities on GHA properties. It is our intent to cooperate with containment efforts and not expose our residents and their guests.