

Introduction

Covid-19 presents a challenging and unique situation for Greek housing. Differences in local, state and federal requirements, coupled with host institution involvement that will vary based on their level of ownership and liability has resulted in a wide variety of local policies and procedures. Navigating these policies is challenging and may seem contradictory to common sense.

There is a strong need for housing corporations (housing corps), host institutions (HI) and cities/towns to collaborate for the health of all students. Housing corps need to align practices to these other stakeholders and agencies to ensure they don't become part of the pandemic's spread and protect the well-being of your members. Greeks must be prepared to implement Covid-19 safe practices to demonstrate they are not a liability and regard student health as a top priority.

Greeks have an opportunity to be leaders and ambassadors of doing the right thing and protecting their fellow students. This guide provides some ideas for them to do so. The most important element resides with the students themselves and their willingness to try and overcome their social nature as needed to protect themselves and with those they socialize. As an alumni advisor or housing corp member, your role is to try to meet the challenge of this unique time with best practices and common sense.

It's highly unlikely that all of the applicable practices in this document will be implemented for a variety of reasons. However, enacting many of these practices will 'layer' the protective measures, and will go a long way to reduce the likelihood of transmission of Covid-19 and at the least, will show the housing corp., alumni advisors and the chapter made good faith efforts based on science and reasonable best practices.

At the least, document your plans and rationale for what is or is not implemented, disseminate them to the entire chapter, and encourage your chapter leadership to make copies or post plans conspicuously in the chapter houses. This paper should serve as a good checklist/template to create your plan. CDC references appear at the end of this document.

Community Partnership

If your chapter house is not located in, and/or is independent of the host institution (college/university) this section applies to you.

It is important to understand what is expected from a local community point of view. There may be specific requirements to operate above and beyond those of the HI, as well as resources available for your student residents.

Determine a point of contact (usually someone in the Board of Health Department) in the city/town in which the house is located and plan to have a conversation with them. You should cover and document each of the following topics:

- The current pandemic phase and accompanying restrictions on a chapter house.
- Plans for communication with the house corp., and the expectations for reporting (plans, illnesses, etc.)
- If the city/town offers testing and/or have testing centers for suspected illness, and how the housing corp. would be notified of issues if they must act.
- Resources and materials the city/town can provide to the students and the housing corp. This may include financial, medical, material supplies, counseling, and consultation services.

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- Plans if there is a major local outbreak, which may change the phase level and/or necessitate drastic and immediate actions.
- Opportunities for the chapter to provide services and support for community initiatives during this time, especially when local resources are stretched thin.
 - Do they need help with posting signs, offer community service projects specific to Covid-19 that aides them, such as blood drives, mask/PPE drives (or creating them), shelter volunteers, elderly shopping/delivery services, etc.?
 - Do they need contact tracers (which may offer an income); Coursera has a free contact tracer course through Johns Hopkins, which offers a certificate upon completion, which puts your chapters a step ahead for an opportunity like this.
 - Discussing and showing your documented plans will go a long way to build rapport and trust. It may set the benchmark for the entire Greek system and establish your housing corp. and chapter as strong sources of information/assistance.

Host Institution (HI)/Campus Partnership

Whether your chapter is recognized by the university or not, whether your house is partially or fully controlled (e.g., on HI land) or whether the chapter is large, small, mostly commuter, or at a large state institution, you have an obligation to collaborate and partner with the HI during a pandemic.

Information and resources will be beneficial to both sides, and you will have the opportunity to have your chapter's members take a leadership role on campus if they are willing to abide by the guidance in this paper and serve to aide the HI.

Much like you did with your local city/town's point of contact, you should determine whom is your best resource in the HI. The best starting point is usually the Vice President of Student Affairs or similar level of individual, as they would be involved in decision making, planning and ongoing response. You should cover and document each of the following topics:

- Plans for communication with the house corp., and the expectations for reporting (plans, illnesses, etc.); ensure mutual lines of communication are established, and set up routine touch points, even if it's to say, "no news", as well as establishing emergency channels.
- Does the HI offer testing and/or have testing centers for suspected illness (possibly in concert with a city/local medical resource), and how the Housing Corp would be notified of issues if they must act?
- Is there the expectation for returning students to be tested, as you want to ensure your residents comply, and that you are notified of that compliance?
- Understanding the rules and guides for campus life, to ensure consistency between the campus and your chapter house. At the least, your chapter house should be equivalent, if not more stringent, in its practices versus the HI.
- Resources and materials the HI can provide to the students and the housing corp. This may include financial, medical, material supplies, counseling, and consultation services.
- Plans if there is a major local outbreak, which may change the local pandemic phase level and/or necessitate drastic and immediate actions, such as campus closure.
- Find out if the campus offer access (and discounts) to Covid-19 cleaning services if needed, and would they be the best source for contact tracers if someone in your chapter house becomes ill.
- Plans and guidance for shared services/resources, such as meeting rooms, dining halls/meal plans, on campus events and gatherings on and off campus.

- This includes how the campus will validate and enforce and/or would like cooperative validation and enforcement from the housing corp.
- This is probably the most critical point, because it will require honest discussion and transparency about the nature of young adults and socialization- not just your chapter members, but other Greeks, clubs and the HI's students as whole.
- Opportunities for the chapter to provide services and support for campus initiatives during this time, especially when HI resources are stretched thin.
 - Does the campus need 'Covid Ambassadors' to help deliver the message about proper hygiene and campus guidance and policies, and help with policy development and feedback?
 - Do they need help with posting signs, staffing contact tracing positions (see the previous section for more info), staffing testing centers coordinators, help advising other Greeks, being good role models, distributing pamphlets, co-hosting Covid-safe events, offer community service projects specific to Covid-19 that aides the HI?
 - As was the case with the city/town, discussing and showing your documented plans will go a long way to build rapport and trust. It may set the benchmark for the entire Greek system and establish your housing corp. and chapter as strong sources of information/assistance.

Alumni Partnership

The chapter's alumni and housing corp. members may be a 'harder sell' than the students themselves for many reasons. The thought of lost income (and therefore, less ability to pay down mortgages and other expenses) as well as a lack of understanding or philosophical/political disagreement with pandemic guides, data and requirements, and a feeling that cooperation with the city/town and HI may be an act of submission need to be addressed.

Its important to note early and often that the measures you are taking are not simply giving in to political or HI will, it is to comply with said regulations regardless of one's personal belief, and also to at the least, protect the students or their unseen susceptible parents, or relatives, or even those students with pre-existing conditions (i.e., immunocompromised and asthmatics).

Additionally, any chapter house not in alignment with local and HI practices may be viewed as a 'safe haven' for bad behaviors and increase the likelihood of some unwanted issue - which will lead to bad PR for the chapter, the house and its students. The sacrifices to be made in the short term are necessary to protect the chapter's long-term interests.

Of critical importance, and a necessary conversation: how much can occupancy and utility use be reduced for the coming scholastic year? What reserves are in place, what projects can be delayed? What gatherings and celebrations must be cancelled or transformed? To this end, the following should be explored, considered and documented

- Financial impacts and action plans to cover for loss of income/increased expenses.
- Fundraising efforts to supplement the mortgage, and other income usually generated by gatherings (i.e., Homecoming).
- Scholarships to support returning students who lost/saw reduction to their internships, summer jobs, scholarships, etc.
- Cancellation of open houses, tours and other alumni centric events; many could be switched to virtual meetings with the use of a mobile camera and webinar account.

- Connections and contacts that can provide or donate supplies for cleaning and hygiene for the residents: face coverings, EPA approved cleaning supplies, wipes, etc.

Parental Partnership

Parents are just as critical to engage early and regularly, as they subsidize or outright pay for their student's education, including room and board. Where the campus is already been in communication with their plan details (and probably have websites dedicated to their plans), housing corps should be reaching out as well, even if to simply note their alignment with local and HI practices. The following should be explored, implemented as needed, and documented

- Communicate with parents at least a month prior to class start up. The communication should include the new prevention measures and practices implemented at the chapter house, and your alignment/open communication with the HI and local agencies.
- Expectations at move in: limits on who can assist, such as scheduled move in (e.g., by floor or year of graduation), and who can and cannot attend (e.g., one parent only can assist).
- Changes and expectations in the lease. This may include payments and refunds based on actual occupancy dates.
- How the student will be trained/oriented for the changes (which should also be a requirement as part of the lease).
- Support for ill/suspected ill students. This includes plans for segregated bathrooms, and support for students who must stay in their rooms until they recover (i.e. meal delivery, cleaning).
- Support and expectations if the HI cancels in-person classes and shuts the campus on short notice
- A request for supplies that will help the chapter house and their student: wipes, EPA-approved disinfectants, extra masks, cleaning supplies.

Student Partnership and Chapter House Logistics

Without the cooperation of the chapter and a solid plan for the chapter house, all the other efforts to date will not matter. The relationships and goodwill built with the community, HI and parents will quickly dissolve and you will lose all credibility if the chapter and their residents are not prepared, or if preparations and policies are ignored.

Nothing can 100% prevent the spread of Covid-19, but these measures, especially applied in parallel, seek to minimize its impact and intrusion as well as demonstrate the good faith efforts you have made. Flexibility is critical as conditions change- unexpected viral spread, campus closure, outbreaks, etc.

You are in a difficult position in one regard: because of medical privacy laws, you cannot obtain student health information unless they consent it. This may present some challenges.

The biggest challenge will be the application of physical ("social") distancing to the chapter house, even if this guide is implemented by students in their privately rented off-campus apartments and unofficial chapter houses.

The term 'de-densification' or 'de-densifying' will be used to describe the process of determining what six feet of separation looks like, especially in areas where students may congregate. De-densifying means to essentially

thin out the number of bodies in a space at a given time and overall, by administrative measures (i.e., policies) as well as physical measures (i.e., removal of chairs and tables).

Your plans need careful study, consideration documentation and communication to all parties, especially the students - early and often.

- Our members should be constantly encouraged to seek ways to be seen as leaders during the pandemic. Wearing face coverings (Greek logos are welcome), seeking out contact tracing jobs (which pay well in some areas), and proactively seeking ways to partner with, work for, or support HI and city/town Covid-19 initiatives. Doing so will raise their visibility (which will help with recruitment) and build greater credibility and trust with the HI, community and other students.
- If any student voluntarily discloses that they have a pre-existing condition or are in a high-risk category, you will need to consider their accommodations with more scrutiny than other residents.
- The CDC has many resources to address your contractors, service vendors and hired staff control measures - cleaners, cooks, etc. Review those resources and draft a set of simple guidelines and expectations and obtain their signature in agreement.
- Develop a pre-move in cleaning process. Note who will perform this and how they will be protected from exposure. The CDC has resources on cleaning methods and strategies as well as a link to EPA-approved disinfectants.
- Establish one of the residents as 'Covid Chairman' to issue you frequent reports on behaviors, supplies, HI policies, and other Covid related matters so you are kept aware of the house's conditions and compliance. The chair should pass along feedback and observations about the implemented practices to the housing corp. for review, revision or enforcement actions.
 - Warning: do not turn this person into a policeman. If it goes that far, you have a bigger issue and need to step in. Ensure a clear reporting process and clarity of understanding on the role. There should be a corresponding member of the House Corporation charged with monitoring our COVID processes and compliance.
 - Additionally, this chair could be a conduit for information and resources from the HI and city/town.
- Personal hygiene based on CDC guidance is expected. This includes the practice of physical distancing (6 feet between people when possible) and use of face coverings (especially when 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained).
- Many CDC references are provided at the end of this paper for your review.
- Hold regular meeting with the housing corp. and other key stakeholders to review plan implementation, issues, HI and community status, and adjust plans and actions as needed.
- Ensure the HVAC system has been serviced and is working to manufacturer specifications. If the house has undergone renovations or changes in walls/layout since it was installed, please consult a professional to ensure it will supply adequate service. Where needed, increase the intake of fresh air and minimize recirculated air. Be careful not to have too much ventilation and air movement, which can create pockets or areas of turbulent air, which can increase the spread of droplets.
- If your chapter is considering any sort of live event, besides collaboration with the HI and the housing corp., the chapter should take all of these guidelines into account for distancing, spacing, dining/food serving, visitors/guests, etc.
- If you are considering testing (nasal swab or blood) there are several points to review.
 - What would be the purpose (i.e., to align with the HI, to establish a health baseline for the house, to allow a resident to come out of self-quarantine).

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- What would be the test frequency (note: unless residents are tested almost daily or every 48 hours, you will be limited in what you will learn, and if you are 'too late' to stop transmission).
- What kind of testing, where it will be done, and who will administer it (i.e. self-test kit, or go to a health center) and who will pay for it (as per previous sections, the city/town or HI may have testing resources already established).
- Do you test just residents, or everyone in the chapter that may come into the house?
- Most importantly, you need to understand local and state medical privacy laws as to what you can ask for, who will receive the information and the limits on what can be done with it.
- The CDC has some guidelines and information about testing practices and limitations.

- Determine the reasonable number of residents per room.
 - Consider routine activities from waking up and dressing to studying, playing video games, personal storage (including food) and going to bed.
 - A good rule of thumb may be to convert 'doubles' to 'singles', and 'quads' with a shared bathroom (double/double configuration) to one or two single bed spaces.
 - This will be the hardest decision to make, as you are essentially decreasing income. Decisions may need to be made to close off some rooms if use is unfeasible based on the other guidelines in this document.
 - Ensure the internet/Wi-Fi is readily available and as strong as possible in the chapter house, in case all students must log on and stream class videos at once.

- Map out travel and activity pathways and habits in the chapter house to de-densify the house and minimize contact by students. (If needed, perform this remotely with someone travelling the house alone wearing a portable video camera while you take notes.) This may include
 - One-way direction, such as one stairwell to travel up and another to travel down. Install signs as needed.
 - Scheduling routine activities, such as bathroom use, and dining assignments. Post signs and log sheets.
 - Determine the capacity of common areas and rooms. Measure a six-foot radius; remove seats to increase spacing, or mark seats as 'out of service' or remove seat pans. Allowed seats should be marked.
 - Where seats cannot be removed or spacing is difficult or impossible, consider physical barriers like plexiglass or plastic sheets when contact is expected for more than just 'passing by', such as bathroom use. Combined with scheduling use times, de-densification can be achieved.
 - Based on local ordinance, determine where, when and how (if at all) group capacities can be met. Keep in mind this includes students and any guests. Log books, sign-up sheets, etc. should be used to track reservations and guests.
 - Sign, markers and tape should be posted as reminders on spacing.
 - Good ventilation of rooms is important. Where possible, single pass (non-recirculated) air should be used, but not so aggressively that the air is visibly turbulent (e.g., you see papers rustling, or dust is moving). The CDC has guidelines for air circulation and ventilation strategies.

- Have a plan to handle visitors. A solid policy on who may visit, how many at a time, what they need to know, how to screen them and information you collect will further establish the safety of all residents and members.

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- When you determine your house capacity, determine how many visitors would be allowed if the house is full. Note: the housing corp. should decide who has priority after residents: other members or house visitors.
 - Maintain a log book of all visitors. You should know name, contact info, who they visited, when and for how long. Archive daily logs at least 30 days.
 - Designate one entry only for all visitors. If there is traffic, the resident bringing in a visitor should help maintain 6 feet spacing as people enter and exit.
 - Upon entry, visitors should answer a series of questions about their current health, contact with any positive cases, etc. The CDC has a list of symptoms and suggested questions are available from many state agencies in their Covid-19 policies for entering a workplace or public place.
 - Issue wristbands or other markers to note who has been screened. Change the marker/wristband color or pattern daily.
 - Keep a tally of entrants on a white board or similar near the entry for all members to see and amend as needed. Spot check the house on occasion to ensure accuracy.
 - Consider a reservation system if you expect you will reach capacity often.
 - Ensure entrants receive and abbreviated set of 'house rules' during Covid-19. They can sign in the log book they have read and understood it.
- Understand the number of people that your students come into contact on average. This will be very valuable and helpful for contact tracers (people who investigate and ID potentially exposed persons). This will be a daunting task even for the most diligent student but should still be encouraged. Each student should keep a log of their close contacts (anyone within 6 feet of them for more than a few minutes)
 - Their routine activities and interactions outside of their chapter house. This log should go back at least 5 days.
 - The guests they invite to social events, and others they may contact during a social event.
 - Dining service practices should be evaluated, revised as needed, implemented and documented
 - Meals should be wrapped/bagged and 'grab and go' style, not unlike a fast food restaurant. The CDC has guidelines for food preparers and the restaurant industry that should be reviewed.
 - Dining utensils should be disposable where possible.
 - Food deliveries to the house should be 'contactless'- that is, deliveries are left on a front porch for the resident that ordered it.
 - Supplies and materials deliveries for the kitchen and house (including cleaning supplies) should also be contactless as much as possible.
 - Flush your water handling system prior to move in and ensure proper disinfection and water treatment, especially if the house water system has not been used or barely used in a while. Flushing should be routine if the amount used dramatically drops due to lower occupancy or less kitchen use.
 - Handling and touching surfaces, while not deemed likely for spread of Covid-19 per the CDC, still presents some opportunities for minimizing direct contact/touching. Therefore, cleaning protocols should be considered and implemented to address this
 - As much as possible, students should avoid sharing objects with each other unless cleaned prior to sharing.
 - A cleaning service or resident rotation should be established, complete with sign off log sheets in common areas. Cleaning twice a day minimum is suggested for bathrooms, door knobs, rails, touch

- pads, handles, laundry areas, bathroom accessories, etc. The CDC has a list of commonly touched areas for consideration.
 - Cleaning supplies should be distributed to each student to clean their own room and use areas. For common areas, cleaning materials are also made available. Include 'flip over signs' to show areas that are dirty/used if they were not cleaned by a student immediately after use.
 - The CDC has a link to the EPA -approved disinfecting materials and information on cleaning practices and protective equipment.
 - Students should, as much as possible, clean common areas before and after they use them.
 - In the event a student is known or suspected ill, a full sanitizing process should take place for their room. This can be done by a professional service, which you should identify prior to move in, with their emergency contact information readily available.
- If there are changes in city/local are phases which may require drastic/immediate action, have a plan to quickly 'shelter in place' your residents or help them move out.
 - Consider out of state and out of country residents as priority.
 - Collaborate with the HI on housing: they may be interested in some space once your residents move out for their international students, or they may be able to help accommodate any in your house.
 - Obtain allowances for food delivery, cleaning services and other critical needs from the city/town. You may need to obtain 'essential worker/supply' passes or permission from the city/town, and arrange this ahead of time if needed.
 - Prepare a move out schedule that aligns with local mandates. Ensure move out is completed by any mandated local deadlines.
 - If you have any residents who cannot move out and must remain for any extended duration, ensure you have a plan for them to remain safely in the house while continuing all previously established policies, even if they're alone.
 - Ensure all pets are accounted for and have a plan.
 - Ensure all areas are kept orderly upon move out; no food left out, locks are in place and activated, utilities are set as per your guidelines and seasonal needs.

Illness or Suspected Illness Measures

Inevitably, there will be suspect or positive cases in your chapter house. Even with good practices, transmission is possible, and hopefully, if all your documented guidance was followed, minimized. In that event, several steps should be prepared and activated when needed. Testing is usually provided by local health officials, and isolation protocols can end after two negative tests have been confirmed

- Students should understand the signs and symptoms, per CDC guidance.
- If a student was informed by a contact tracer or health official they were in contact with someone who was ill/suspected, they need to assume they are ill and should self-quarantine.
- Coordinate with the HI to determine if any on-campus or campus run facilities are available for isolation purposes.
- Where feasible, a separate bathroom and sleeping room should be designated for suspect/known students, as well as accommodations to bring food (with disposable utensils) to their room, left at the door.
- All trash from their room should be bagged by the individual.
- When the student must leave their room (laundry, bathroom, meals) they should do so when there are minimal people in the house, and they should clean all contacted areas after they pass by.

- If the student must leave the chapter house because they are ill/Covid-19 positive or as advised by a health professional, their room should be unoccupied and not entered for at least 7 days before sanitizing the room and belongings.
- During the isolation period (and as follow up if they leave school), counseling should be strongly encouraged and provided as needed. The HI or city/town probably has services they can utilize and should be determined prior to move in for the semester.
- If the person is arriving from a state or area that your house's local jurisdiction requires a self-quarantine period, this should be followed (or at the least follow the HI's similar practices), and all of the above practices should apply.

Closing

This paper takes elements from several Centers for Disease Control (CDC) resources, since chapters and chapter houses are unique and share characteristics with several other entities. Despite which elements you may employ from this plan, you need to document your plan. It then needs to be reviewed often, communicated widely, and revised as needed.

Even for unofficial off-campus housing and members not living in the chapter house, many of these guidelines can and should be applied by chapter leaders and local alumni volunteers. Because they are students at the HI, they need to abide by the campus guidelines or possibly face a Student Conduct hearing both as a group and as individuals. There are several sections in this holistically framed document, including community, host institution, parent and student partnerships that can assist you in a variety of settings.

About the author: *Ed Levesque is a Certified Industrial Hygienist by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene and a full Member of the Business Continuity Institute. He has practiced emergency response, recovery and business continuity for over 15 years with a global pharmaceutical company. He has led local, regional and global planning initiatives, and has conducted exercises on all scales, including pandemic preparation and response. Ed is a former long-time local and regional advisor and former international board member of Sigma Pi Fraternity. The information in this document is based on Ed's personal opinion, experience and research, and may not reflect those of his company or Sigma Pi Fraternity.*

References

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