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Coronavirus: A Guide for REALTORS®
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What unique issues does coronavirus present to the real estate industry?

When an infectious disease, such as coronavirus, is associated with a specific population or nationality, fear and anxiety may lead to social stigma and potential discrimination. REALTORS® must be mindful of their obligations under the Fair Housing Act, and be sure not to discriminate against any particular segment of the population. While the coronavirus outbreak began in Wuhan, China, that does not provide a basis for treating Chinese persons or persons of Asian descent differently.

May I ask clients or others I interact with in my real estate business if they have traveled recently, or have any signs of respiratory illness?

Yes, you may ask clients or others about their recent travel, particularly to areas identified as having an increased risk of coronavirus. To avoid potential fair housing issues, be sure to ask all clients the same screening questions based on current, factual information from public health authorities.

I typically drive my clients to showings. May I refuse to drive potential clients to see homes?

Yes. However, be sure that any change to your business practices is applied equally to all clients. You may refuse to drive clients who show signs of illness or reveal recent travel to areas of increased risk of coronavirus, or you may instead decide to stop driving clients in your car altogether, and simply arrange to meet clients at a property. If you do continue to drive clients in your car, it is a good idea to frequently clean and disinfect surfaces like door handles and seat belt latches, and to ask clients to use hand sanitizer when getting in and out of the car.

Should I still conduct open houses on my listed properties?

Speak openly and honestly with your seller about the pros and cons of holding an open house. Assess the risk based on your specific location, and direct your clients to local and state health authorities for specific information about the severity of the risk in your area. You could also propose alternative marketing opportunities for your seller's consideration, such as video tours and other methods to virtually tour a property. If you do hold an open house, consider requiring all visitors to disinfect their hands upon entering the home, limiting the amount of people in the home and providing alcohol-based hand sanitizers at the entryway, as well as soap and disposable towels in bathrooms. If you decide to do any cleaning at your client's home, be sure to check with your client in advance about any products you plan to use. After the open house, recommend that your client clean and disinfect their home, especially commonly touched areas like doorknobs and faucet handles.