Future of Housing Checklist

Opening student housing for the next academic term will require professionals to engage in proactive planning around COVID-19, a dynamic issue about which we are still learning. Below is a recommended checklist of items that campus professionals should review as soon as possible.

This list is not exhaustive, rather it represents a working document, which will be added to as we learn more about the virus and associated mitigation strategies, and receive further guidance from public health professionals/entities, including but not limited to, the Center for Disease Control (US).

This checklist of considerations has been curated by the ACUHO-I Future of Housing Work Group. Campus professionals should consult with their local public health officials, campus emergency response team, legal counsel, and senior staff prior to implementation.

1. Establish a process for students to store, retrieve, ship, or dispose of personal belongings to ensure room readiness:
   • Identify method to allow individuals to safely return to campus.
   • Generate a list of approved moving and storage companies.
   • If your policy is to ship items to students, clearly articulate if you will charge students or assume the costs.
   • Clearly communicate about what will happen to unclaimed items.

2. Review processes and associated communications plans related to:
   • Refunding or discounting housing fees.
   • Cancelling future housing.
   • Accessing grants, stimulus, and hardship funding.
   • Supporting international students unable to return to home country.
   • Supporting students who are unable to return home due to unsafe conditions, financial hardship, and other circumstances.
   • Complying with country, state or local restrictions.

3. Model different housing capacity scenarios. Models currently being considered by professionals in the field, include but are not limited to:
   • Status quo (likely the model you used in 2019).
   • Single occupancy (regardless of room type) with community bathroom.
   • Single occupancy (regardless of room type) with private bathroom.
   • Suite style with private bathroom.
   • Apartment style with private bathroom.
   • Co-occupancy for students with known immunity to COVID-19 and single occupancy for students not known to be immune to COVID-19 (assumes antibody testing is developed in time).
   • In buildings with community bathrooms, model the following:
     • Assigned shower for each resident.
     • Use of every other shower/stall.
     • Sanitizing between users and/or increasing frequency of cleaning.
     • Identify alternatives for frequently used over-flow strategies that increase density beyond design (triples, quads).
   • Discuss closing floors or buildings due to possible low occupancy.
   • Other models will likely be necessary based on your housing stock, anticipated size of your residential student population and local public health conditions.

4. Evaluate your COVID-19 quarantine/isolation capabilities:
   • Review your institution’s protocol for the management of exposed and ill residents.
   • Seek to use a dedicated area/wing away from other residents or identify off-campus location(s) that could be used for quarantine/isolation spaces.
• Consider apartment or suite style rooms, where students have access to their own bathroom, kitchen, and even laundry facilities (if possible).
• Document processes such as how students in quarantine/isolation will receive meals and medications, trash removal, and how these spaces will be sanitized between turns.
• Source PPE (personal protective equipment) for staff members who are immuno- compromised and/or at high risk for exposure.
• Identify additional resourcing needs and supplies for quarantine/isolation rooms (e.g., bio-hazard trash bags).
• Review your institution’s process for providing mental health support for students in quarantine/isolation.

5. Prepare and support staff and student leaders:
• Train live-in professionals, graduate hall directors, and resident assistants (RAs) on public health measures; signs; and symptoms of COVID-19.
• Consider whether PPE (and training on how to use it) is needed for live-in, graduate hall directors, RAs and other staff who work most directly with students.
• Consider who can/should continue working remotely given their role and their vulnerability to the virus.
• Recognize the toll of this type of work, and provide resources, including access to mental health providers.

6. Implement mitigation strategies to protect all community members:
• Discuss readiness to return to normal building operations with your senior medical officer and/or environmental health officer.
• Establish a procedure for reporting symptoms.
• Investigate temperature checking, testing, and tracing options, and who will be charged with these duties.
• Promote prevention strategies (hand washing; physical distancing; wearing masks/face coverings, etc.) via multiple communication methods (e-mail, signage, text messages, etc.)
• Provide supplies to encourage prevention strategy compliance (soap; hand-sanitizer; etc.)
• Install plexi-glass barriers (sometimes called “sneeze guards”) at all front desks.
• Consider one-way hallways (if possible).
• Rearrange furniture in building entry ways, lobbies, etc. to account for physical distancing (6 feet/2 meters).
• Cancel non-essential activities.
• Consider restricting access to residential buildings to residents and essential staff (no visitors or guests).

7. Initiate discussions with your college/university legal counsel regarding modifications to housing contract(s) to imply risk assumption and address:
• The provision of limited services (e.g., staffing, dining, maintenance, etc.).
• Adhering to physical distancing policies.
• Testing and tracing requirements.
• Housing refund policies.
• Contract cancellations.
• Heightened risk due to COVID-19 in the community.

8. Coordinate purchasing of critical supplies, PPE, signage, and other COVID-related items with campus or local institutions:
• Investigate collaborating with other offices and nearby campuses for bulk ordering.

9. Tap into the current thinking of peers in your region or other regions:
• Many regions have weekly calls with senior housing officers to discuss plans and collaborate.
• Utilize ACUHO-I and other associated community forums to understand how campus units are planning around COVID-19 and return to campus.
This is an important step because of the variability of community spread within any given location/region, and different levels of resources between institution types.

10. Familiarize yourself with official sources of information and guidelines on managing COVID-19 in community spaces:
   - CDC
     - Guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting building facilities
     - Guidance for Shared or Congregate Housing
     - Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education
   - Johns Hopkins University
     - Phased reopening guide for governors
   - American College Health Association (ACHA)
     - COVID-19 resources: https://www.acha.org/COVID-19
   - Australian Government Department of Health
   - World Health Organization
     - https://covid19.who.int/
   - International SOS

   - Straw poll data reports.
   - Virtual roundtable recordings & supplements.
   - Online community threads.
   - Partner resources.
   - Library documents.

Have suggestions for other items that should be added to this list? Please e-mail Christopher Silva, Chair of the Future of Housing Work Group, at csilva@american.edu.