



UPDATED: GAR Best Practices for Conducting Real Estate Transactions during the COVID-19 Crisis

For the Georgia REALTORS® leadership, safety is always at the forefront of our minds for both our members and their clients and business associates. While Georgia is no longer under a Shelter in Place directive, the COVID-19 crisis is ongoing, and will be for the foreseeable future. As Georgia moves forward and continues to re-open, we expect and uptick in real estate activity, and we encourage REALTORS® to be cognizant of CDC safety guidelines and social distancing protocols when interacting with clients and industry partners.

Conducting the transaction

- Consider utilizing the technology available to conduct as much business as possible. Make any listing or buyer materials available in digital format.
- CDC best practices should be followed, such as use of hand sanitizer, gloves and booties to cover shoes. Listing agents should ask sellers to turn on all lights and open all closet/cabinet doors to keep touching to a minimum. Buyer agents should leave the house as it was found and wipe down all doorknobs, light switches etc., with a disinfectant wipe if contact is necessary. The overlapping of showings is prohibited, and a minimum of 45 minutes should be scheduled between all showings at a property. Additionally, any homes that have experienced foot traffic should be thoroughly cleaned.
- The listing agent and seller should discuss the pros and cons of open houses and proceed with (or without) an open house according to the seller's comfort level. Additionally, you should consult with your broker for further guidance.
- It is recommended that when possible, the home inspector be let in the property by the listing or selling agent while practicing distancing of 6 ft. or more.
- In regard to property appraisals, caution and regard for social distancing guidelines should be exercised in any face-to-face interactions that are necessary in the completion of the inspection. It is recommended that when possible, the home appraiser enter the property individually.
- Many title companies have implemented new requirements for notaries, attorneys, and witnesses in connection with the temporary provisions allowing virtual closings with remote signing and after the fact notarization. NOTE: E-notary is still permitted as long as there is a Public Health State of Emergency, which is scheduled to expire June 12.
- Attorneys may impose new guidelines related to closings including limiting attendance at those appointments to only the buyer and closing representative. Please contact the closing attorney for updates on their policies.
- GAR has developed a Special Stipulation for agents to use when delays occur due to COVID-19

Additional considerations

- Please discuss the specifics of any and all transactions that you are engaged in with your broker. Your broker is your best guide to ensure that you are complying with the law as well as the ethical practices of real estate during COVID-19.
- For agents who do receive a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 infection, please follow the CDC's guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>) regarding notification and your diagnosis. Additionally, we discourage the commingling of health updates with current or future listing promotions to the public. These practices stand a chance of stigmatizing the property, and such action does not serve the best interest of clients.
- For brokers who have staff or agents test positive for COVID-19, we encourage you to review NAR's Sample Preparedness Plan to ensure that all staff and agents that return to work are cleared to do so in accordance to the CDC's guidelines. <https://www.nar.realtor/sample-preparedness-plan-for-circumstances-relating-to-covid-19>
- Additionally, brokers should review NAR's Workplace Re-Entry Checklist and devise a multi-faceted and phased approach to the re-entry to the workplace, which takes into account guidance, regulations, and orders issued by federal, state and local governments and agencies. <https://www.nar.realtor/covid-19-workplace-re-entry-checklist>

NAR Resources

Showing Guidance During Re-Opening

<https://www.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/Showing-Guidance-During-COVID-05-14-2020.pdf>

Coronavirus: A Guide for REALTORS®

<https://www.nar.realtor/coronavirus-a-guide-for-realtors>

Guidance for Fair Housing Compliance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/NAR-COVID-19-FH-QAs-05-2020.pdf>