



## Phi Sigma Phi National Fraternity, Inc. Official Statement Regarding COVID-19

*For Immediate Release*

3/12/2020

Phi Sigma Phi National Headquarters has been in discussions over the past several days with staff and college administrators at our host institutions, as well as engaging with doctors and immunologists for how best to proceed during the current outbreak of COVID-19. Many of our college campuses have created and begun contingency education plans for how to best proceed.

**FIRST AND FOREMOST**, follow your individual university's plan. We are all concerned for your health and want what is best for you. Your college or university has been working hard to determine the appropriate course of action and you should reference their resources when making any and all decisions regarding chapter life. Our top priority is your safety and security, so please adhere to these guidelines.

**MEETINGS AND OPERATIONS:** Many of our institutions have recommended canceling in-person meetings for the next several weeks (some have suggested until the end of the semester). If you are unable to meet in-person, consider switching to an e-format — this could be a Skype/FaceTime/GoToMeeting/Zoom, Discord, or other chat software. For those who are able and comfortable with meeting, you may choose to meet in smaller groups off campus. Consider making plans for summer, later in the spring semester, or even the fall semester during this time! Make sure that you are planning for fall rush and that your chapter finances are up-to-date. Just because we are not in-person doesn't mean we can't plan for a bigger and better summer and fall!

**EVENTS:** It is suggested that chapter events be delayed/suspended until COVID-19 is under control. You may choose to do a chapter dinner or volunteer somewhere during this time. Use your best judgment in making these decisions. Conclave 2020 is still scheduled for August 7-9, 2020, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Barring considerable changes, this event is still proceeding as scheduled. Consider taking this extra time to register and plan out your trip to the event. Remember, two brothers from every chapter comes for no charge, with a small fee for those additional brothers. We have an exciting event planned and are looking forward to seeing everyone in August!

**HOUSING:** Chapters should seek guidance from your college or university regarding the housing plan during the event of partial closure or class suspension due to COVID-19.

**CHAPTER VISITS:** Due to the current state of influx on our host campuses, and in part to the nature of this concerning illness, chapter visitations by fraternity leadership will be paused during this time. This is for the health and safety of our leadership and our membership. The organization will maintain regular business relations during this time and all staff are available to assist. You may contact your chapter consultant or national officer for any assistance you may need during this time.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY:** The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has created a useful resource found [here](#). Please consider following these tips and tricks to best prepare for the virus and its affects. Additionally, a medical expert and friend of the fraternity shared the following information with us to pass along.

An Immunologist, Dr. Marc Serota, MD, provided the following information:

1. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses. "coronavirus" is not unique to this particular strain. Everyone reading this has likely had another different coronavirus infection. This particular strain has been named COVID-19.
2. If you're healthy, there is no need to walk around wearing a mask. In addition to looking silly and most of the time wearing/taking them off wrong - which would actually make you more prone to acquiring an infection, they don't prevent you from getting sick. If you're actually sick stay away from people and then, sure, wear a mask so you aren't spreading respiratory droplets every time you cough/sneeze. In medicine we don't wear the masks you're buying and

we wear other protective equipment - not just a silly looking mask you found on Amazon. When you see doctor's walking around the world wearing a mask then you should too.

3. The symptoms are that of the flu. As doctors we don't test or know about most people with mild or moderate flu symptoms. That means most people will probably get it and just think they had the flu. That means you're only going to hear about the cases that get serious - not all the minor ones which will be the vast majority of cases.

4. When it is said that people who are older or have other medical conditions are most likely to die - that is equally true for EVERY upper respiratory virus. There is nothing unique about that to this particular virus. It does mean that the only cases we tend to know about are the severe ones.

5. Take it from me: The poor resident who stood at the door of the ER to triage people in 2009's swine flu (H1N1) hysteria. The over reaction is exponentially worse than the actual problem and in 2020 the over reactions I'm seeing are remarkable. In cold and flu season you'll probably get sick once or twice for about a week each. You might even get this particular coronavirus and most of you won't even know it. I've seen people raiding supermarkets, major meetings and sporting events getting cancelled and fear/racism towards Asian people. These reactions are totally unnecessary and panic based. Just do what you've always done during cold/flu season. Stay away from other people when you're sick, wash your hands and keep them away from your face, and only go to the ER if you feel your symptoms are more severe than a bad cold/flu (shortness of breath, high fever, etc.). And also realize you can't live on earth and not get viral illnesses from time to time. It's a part of nature.

6. Please don't ask for antibiotics (those treat bacteria - not viruses). That's like asking for a fire extinguisher when you're drowning. It can be a life saving device - but the wrong one for the problem at hand. Some doctor's don't want to fight about it when patients insist on antibiotics so they just prescribe them - but it doesn't mean it's actually helping you and in some cases they can be harmful (resistance, infections, allergic reactions just to name a few). If you're one who asks for antibiotics every time you're sick, again, take it from me: ask for a flu shot each year and a doctor's note to stay home from work when you're sick instead. You will be much better off.

7. In conclusion, yes there is a novel virus that our immune systems haven't seen yet so to get immune to it you will have to get infected - at least until a vaccine is developed to bypass the getting sick part and just jumping straight to immune. Most people's immune systems will do that effectively and be fine. A small percentage of unfortunate patients (primarily elderly, immune compromised etc.) will not be able to do that effectively and will need more advanced care. This is true of the cold/flu viruses we deal with every year. Follow normal cold/flu precautions and seek medical care if you feel your symptoms are severe. No need to get hysterical.

8. These outbreaks can be instructive for overall knowledge of public health. In particular showing your immune system the uniform of a potential invader (virus) so that if it ever sees a soldier wearing that uniform it will immediately attack and neutralize it without you ever getting sick. That is a wonderful thing and probably the single biggest achievement in medicine throughout human history. That is what vaccines are. The benefit to risk ratio of them are off the charts in favor of vaccines. If viruses like coronavirus scare you, then stay up to date on your vaccines and your immune system will be running the latest software.

9. If you still think you should be scared consider this: Doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff are going to hospitals every day. Crowded buildings with tons of sick people. They aren't walking around the halls of the hospitals wearing masks and they haven't stopped going to work.

Again, we are monitoring the situation daily and will continue to update our membership as developments occur. For the most up-to-date information, please like us on [Facebook](#).