



# CALIFORNIA CASA RESOURCE GUIDE

We have compiled a list of resources to help our network of nonprofit leaders navigate your own efforts to respond to and contain the COVID-19 in our communities, to support your teams, and to lead your organizations. It is not an exhaustive list, as it could never be. Information on COVID-19 and related public health guidance is frequently changing and proliferating online, so you'll want to stay informed. Your first priority should always be to follow the guidance of health officials in your own county, as well as the leading national/international agencies: the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [WHO: World Health Organization](#).

- [CDC: Steps to Prevent Illness](#)
- [California Department of Public Health - COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [Lessening the Risk of Coronavirus at Nonprofits \(The Nonprofit Times\)](#)
- [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)
- [The Do's and Don'ts of "Social Distancing"](#)
- [Which Groups Are Most at Risk from the Coronavirus?](#)

For any questions regarding your CASA program activities during this time of crisis, please don't hesitate to reach out to Teresa Romney ([TRomney@californiacasa.org](mailto:TRomney@californiacasa.org)).

## Fundraising

---

Many are asking what to do about their upcoming fundraising events—from formal galas to auctions to fun runs. Below we have included various tips and ideas that might be helpful as you move forward, as well as more resource links. Our network is also concerned with the financial situation in the nation, and the impact it may have on fundraising. With specific questions, reach out to Anne Farrell ([AFarrell@californiacasa.org](mailto:AFarrell@californiacasa.org)) or Holley Moore ([HMoore@californiacasa.org](mailto:HMoore@californiacasa.org)).

- [Event and Fundraising Resources - COVID-19 \(Blackbaud\)](#)
- [Event and Fundraising Resources During Possible COVID-19 Impact \[Toolkit from Blackbaud\]](#)
- [Insurance Event Issues: COVID-19 Is your Event Covered? \(PCMA\)](#)
- [Tips for Communicating with Donors During Uncertain Times](#)
- [Tips to Maintain Momentum for Your In-Person Fundraising Events Amidst COVID-19](#)

## Communications

---

In this time of uncertainty, your supporters will be looking to you for information about how your CASA program is being affected and how they can stay involved. We are sharing one document that was created by CASA of Ventura in the event you want to use it as a model for your own communication. (It is included as a Word document so you can cut/paste.) If you have any communications questions, don't hesitate to reach out to Jessica Ballenger at CA CASA ([JBallenger@californiacasa.org](mailto:JBallenger@californiacasa.org)). She will be sending out messaging suggestions to the network over the coming several months. Teresa Romney is also happy to be of assistance.

### In terms of donor communication:

- Don't be afraid to be transparent with your donors, CASAs, and communities about the challenges your organization will face due to canceled events, reductions in donations, and other factors due to the coronavirus. Your supporters and community want to know how the causes they care about are faring, and earnest communication about your challenges allows them to give you the support you need.



- But always remember: **Donors don't give to institutions. They invest in ideas, in missions, and in people in whom they believe. In good times and bad, we know that people give because your organization meets needs, not because your organization has needs.** You and your CASAs are meeting the needs of foster children, among the most vulnerable individuals in our society.
- You should also work with and communicate with your funders to show how their gift continues to be vital to your organization. Corporate sponsors or individual donors, for example, may be evaluating expenditures in light of stock market performance. Foundations are seeing the corpus of their endowments shrink with the stock market decline. By phone, letter, or email, ensure that your supporters know how critical their support is in this time and that they understand any downstream implications of lost funding for the foster children that your CASAs serve.

### **Additional Online Resources**

---

- [Coronavirus scams: 3 things to watch out for](#)
- [Help for Nonprofits During the Coronavirus and Uncertain Economic Times](#)
- [How Philanthropy Can Respond, Center for Disaster Philanthropy webinar](#)



***What to do if you had your big Spring fundraising event ready to go, but because of COVID-19, you have to cancel or postpone?***

- 1. Review all signed contracts to determine if your organization is within the date range for full or partial refunds.** If not, contact all vendor(s) to determine the cost of a rescheduled date, at least one year from the original date. Don't hesitate to ask their forbearance and for their generosity under the challenging circumstances.
- 2. Involve your Board.** As soon as you have ALL numbers and timelines in place, draft a one-page document for Board Review; convene a virtual meeting if possible. Compile and crunch all relevant numbers related to cancellation. Identify a proposed date for 2021 reschedule. Make a decision on how to proceed.
- 3. Craft a strong, concise message that emphasizes that the decision was made in the interest of everyone's health and safety.** Find ways to reiterate that the needs of your CASA program have not diminished and that you are grateful for the community's support and their concern for the foster kids in your county. Emphasize that the work goes on, even during this crisis, because the needs exist.
- 4. If you sold tickets and/or sponsorships for your event, familiarize yourself with the refund process.** Err on the side of being overly generous with individual guest refunds and sponsorships. A potential public relations nightmare is not worth the savings or a balanced budget. Questions to consider below:
  - Can guests elect to donate their registration fee as a gift to your nonprofit?
  - How will your organization use funds when individuals do not request a refund?
  - Should you do this proactively or ask guests to email you to request a refund?
  - Can you refund everyone's ticket to the original form of payment?
  - How long will the refund process take (for individuals and sponsors)?
- 5. Were you planning an auction?** If you have already received items for an auction, consider the cost of moving it online this year. If that's not possible, communicate with the donors to see if the items can be postponed to a future date.
- 6. After all the essentials are confirmed and tested: communicate, communicate, communicate.** Sort your event RSVP list in descending order of investment/amount of gift/level of support. In many cases, the first call should be to the lead sponsor of your event. This call should come from the CEO and Board Chair, with pre-discussed talking points regarding the factors considered in the decision to cancel. You should call all the major donors and ticket/table buyers. After all key people are notified by phone, email all registered guests followed by another email to invited guests who haven't yet



RSVP'd. Keep your communications brief with easy to read details regarding next steps front and center.

7. **Cover all your bases.** Make sure the event cancellation is posted everywhere and appoint a single contact for all event-related inquiries. Disable ticket sales, update your website, and announce on social media—not once but several times. Include a link to the [CDC's website](#) as well as State of California directives and any other local directives, so you are offering the latest information and public health recommendations.

### **Extra Tips for surviving a canceled fundraiser**

- **Never back off !** This may be a no-brainer, but many organizations may feel like they need to step back and leave their donors and sponsors alone. Not at all! Now, more than ever, it is important to **connect, reconnect, and engage** even more deeply – everyone. That means all your sponsors, event attendees, and auction buyers.
- Use this opportunity to **talk more about your work**, and less about the event itself. This is your chance to convert event attendees to mission-based attendees. It could be a pivotal moment in your relationship with these people – to start the effort to turn them from ticket-buyers to actual donors.
- **How do you do this?** Ask people to donate the cost of their ticket. When you let everyone know that the event is cancelled, offer everyone an opportunity to make the cost of their ticket a contribution to your work.
- **Reveal how much your auction or event makes each year – and how important this is to your operating budget.** It is an excellent time to start communicating about your work and the impact you make – not just what a great party you had to cancel.
- **Be transparent and honest about the situation.** When you write your donors, it's okay to be totally transparent. When you are this open and honest, and cite real numbers, it enhances your credibility. You build trust with your donor or event attendee.
- **Share specifically what you do with the money.** Try to be specific about a program or project that the event helps to fund. This type of specific information can help open a donor's heart and incline them to contribute.

### **A Silver Lining?**

Who knows, maybe there is a silver lining to your cancelled event. Maybe you will sharpen your messaging. Perhaps you'll find new ways to communicate your impact and develop other fundraising strategies. Learn the latest strategies in digital fundraising and communications – and apply them. Learn to use video and Zoom in new ways to share stories of impact. Ramp up your major gifts efforts.

None of this is easy. It requires fresh ways of thinking and operating. But a silver lining is that you will develop new communications and engagement skills. You'll review your fundraising strategies and reconsider the emphasis on events. And, you'll start the long-term effort to switch event donors to mission-based donors. And that can only be a positive change!



## Responding to the Coronavirus Outbreak: Resources to Help Nonprofits

By Margie Fleming Glennon

Source: [The Chronicle of Philanthropy, March 12, 2020](#)

Whether you are guiding staff about travel or [remote work](#), wondering [what other groups are doing](#) in response to COVID-19, fielding donors' questions about your nonprofit's response or the [impact on planned events](#), or [worrying that the virus will dampen your fundraising](#), it's a lot to handle. To help you cope, here are a few online resources we've collected to save you time, help you plan swiftly, and keep you focused on your most pressing priorities.

### How to Manage, Lead, and Communicate

---

#### [Coronavirus Advice for Nonprofit Leaders](#)

By Sara Gibson, CEO, 20 Degrees. Includes tips for communicating during a crisis, strengthening financial resilience, preparing for disruptions to operations, and planning long-term in the wake of the virus.

#### [How to Use Scenario Planning to Prepare for COVID-19](#)

By Trista Harris. Advice for charities and foundations. Includes a simple tool for conducting a brainstorming session about possible future challenges and opportunities.

#### [Communicating in a Crisis](#)

How to put people and plans in place ahead of time so you can respond swiftly in the event of a natural disaster, tragedy, or bruising investigation.

#### [What To Do When Your Cause Is in the Spotlight: Lessons From the Amazon Fires](#)

Rainforest-preservation and indigenous-rights groups saw a spike in donations and interest when fires in Brazil drew the world's attention. What can your nonprofit learn from their experience?

#### [10 Tips for a Better Crisis Communications Strategy](#)

Nonprofit and crisis experts offer guidance on how to communicate effectively during a crisis.

### Fundraising

---

#### [Tips for Deciding Whether to Hold or Cancel a Fundraising Event](#)

By Swaim Strategies. Advice on how to assess the risks of holding an event, important messages to convey clearly, and how to decide whether to cancel or reschedule.

#### [Market Drops and Crisis: Fundraising Lessons and Your Lighthouse](#)

By John Pepperdine, principal, Making Philanthropy Work Strategies. Lessons from the Great Recession and the terrorist attacks of 2001 to inform your major-gift strategies in a time of crisis.

[5 Ways to Raise Money When Donors Are Consumed by Nonstop News](#) Don't give up just because your cause isn't the topic of the moment.

#### [Why Fundraisers Should Take the Long View](#)

Being patient and keeping all donors informed can result in big rewards.

### Technology Solutions

---

#### [Nonprofit Resources for Remote Work During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

Includes options that can be implemented relatively quickly, with little or no external tech support to keep communication flowing and foster collaboration while staff members work remotely.

[Understanding Videoconferencing Tools Available to Your Nonprofit](#) Published by Tech Soup. Includes a side-by-side comparison of different tools.