# National Federation of the Blind COVID-19 Policy Relating to Public Events

The National Federation of the Blind is closely following the rapidly evolving situation with respect to the novel coronavirus and its associated illness known as COVID-19. Since we issued our initial guidance on this situation on March 11, public officials across the nation have escalated their response to the virus and issued new and more aggressive directives. Generally, while specific directives as to the size of permitted public gatherings vary across states and local jurisdictions, public health officials agree that it is advisable to engage in “social distancing” in order to prevent or mitigate the spread of the virus, and people are being directed to minimize proximity and/or physical contact with others outside the home as much as possible. As a result, the National Federation of the Blind Board of Directors met on March 13 and developed this policy directive related to public meetings of the organization.

The National Federation of the Blind is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind people, with affiliates in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; hundreds of local chapters; as well as statewide and national special-interest divisions. Together these are comprised of some fifty thousand members and countless volunteers and supporters who conduct various public meetings and events. The health and safety of our members and friends is our top priority, and we are also mindful of our obligation to follow public health directives and to engage responsibly with the general public. We also recognize the need for consistent guidance across our organization as our affiliates, chapters, and divisions consider or plan meetings and public events.

To that end, the President and Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind hereby direct that all meetings, events, or public gatherings that are currently planned by affiliates, chapters, and divisions to take place within thirty days from today, March 13, 2020, are to be canceled or postponed until sometime after April 12, 2020. This includes, but is not limited to, statewide conventions or meetings, local chapter meetings, and statewide or local division meetings. Of course, where practicable, meetings to conduct the ongoing business of the Federation may be held via phone call or videoconference. Furthermore, the outreach and advocacy priorities of the organized blind movement can and should continue despite the disruption to public meetings, including monitoring unique barriers that blind individuals encounter due to the extreme circumstances. However, no official business of the organization should be conducted via in-person gatherings during this period. The national leadership will re-evaluate the situation on or shortly after April 12, 2020, and issue additional guidance if needed.

We are issuing this directive to align with the best available public health advice as well as with multiple state and local directives, and to carry out our general obligation to protect the health and safety of everyone in our Federation family. We wish everyone the best as together we meet the challenges and make the sacrifices required by this public health emergency.