

# Responsible Conferencing in New Zealand Pre-Event

*Information contained within this document applies specifically to hosting conferences, meetings and events safely in the context of contagious disease. The guidelines do not include all steps and considerations in conference, meeting and event planning. They are specific to mitigating exposure to contagious disease while hosting face-to-face meetings and events. Each organisation and event are different, so these suggestions should be modified to fit individual circumstances.*

The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice - nor does it represent the official perspective of any of the volunteers' employers; instead, all information, content, and materials available are for general informational purposes only.

*We thank and acknowledge all those who contributed to the research and development of this resource.*

Contents – Please note items are hyperlinked.

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## Section I: Should You Host a Face to Face Event?

Should you host an in-person event? The purpose of this tool is to assist planners in making decisions regarding whether or not to host an in-person event, and also how to host an event safely if hosting a face-to-face meeting.

As you and your organisation work to redesign/reimagine meetings and events, timelines are often compressed and stress often runs high. It's important to dedicate necessary resources (e.g., time, staff, volunteers and expenses) to ensure all in-person, hybrid and virtual meetings and events are planned and implemented with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Items to consider when deciding whether to host an in-person meeting:

- What is the facility's ability to accommodate the meeting requirements?
- What accommodations for safe social distancing for the group's size are possible in the venue(s)?
- Review number of people vs. square footage of meeting space
- Review traffic patterns and places of extended contact
- What other groups or traffic is expected in house over the same time period?
- Demographics of the audience
- Industry
- Is the industry directly impacted by this situation, making it inappropriate or contentious to consider hosting?
- Age and health status of participants
- Gathering in public is particularly risky for older or immune compromised populations
- Travel origin: Local or domestic attendance
- How much travel, and, therefore possible participant exposure via airports, trains, ride-share, etc., would be required?
- Business Plan
- Board support for moving forward with in-person meetings
- Staff and volunteer requirements for moving forward with in-person meetings
- Determine the financial break-even analysis
- Reminder of formulas
- Break-even for Quantity = Fixed Costs / Price – Variable Cost or
- Break-even for Quantity = Fixed Costs / Contribution Margin
- Contribution Margin = Price – Variable Cost
- Consider possible new costs associated with safety and reduced attendance
- Mailing materials in advance to reduce contact at registration
- Additional meeting room space needs to accommodate social distancing
- Providing personal safety gear for participants
  - Face coverings
  - Sanitiser
  - Stanchions and signage
  - Gloves
- Determine participant support for attendance
- Would the constituents feel safe to participate in a meeting?
- Are your constituents able to afford to attend?
- Are your constituents willing to abide by new safety measures to attend a meeting (such as wearing face coverings, maintaining social distance, etc.)
- Survey the membership and/or sponsors (Resource #2)
- Take into consideration Travel Safety Advice

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- Venue Safety - (*See section III. Pre-Planning Efforts with Venue*)
- Is the venue located in a location with recent outbreaks?
- Is travel to and from the location considered safe and accessible with social distancing?
- Has the venue experienced events that resulted in recent outbreaks?
- What is the venue willing to take on to support safety at the event?

### Section 1-A: Site Considerations

- Appoint an Event Pandemic Risk Coordinator(s) to be sure pandemic protocols are implemented and followed throughout the event
- Reference/create listing of roles and responsibilities (Resource #8)
- [Risk Management for Event Planning](#)
- Train Event Pandemic Risk Coordinators appropriately (including how to monitor and use personal safety gear, chemical use for sanitation, if necessary)

Items to consider when you decide to host an in-person meeting:

- Do you need to adjust the agenda (social distancing, hybrid accommodations, smaller attendance)
- Is there a government mandate limiting the size of gatherings/meetings?
- Control the size of the crowd per space capacity
- *Pre-Planning Efforts with Venue - Diagrams/Layouts*
- Limit attendance to primary registrants/members only
- No family or guests
- Consider segmenting the event to accommodate smaller group sizes so participants can spread out
- Consider the number of sessions to offer
- Consider staggered timing to allow for safe transitions:
- Breaks and restroom use
- Meal service
- Passageways
- Broadcast to multiple rooms to maximise attendee safe distancing
- Do you need to adjust your staffing?

Determine essential staff necessary to perform functions

- What remote work is possible to minimise exposure?
- Who are the critical event staff necessary to attend on-site? How could you adjust working in shifts?
- Event planner
- Leadership
- Volunteers / staff
- Determine participant cancellation and penalty policy for pandemic related reasons (*if applicable*)
- How do you handle cancellations regarding other health/personal issues? Does a pandemic qualify any differently than other illnesses?
- Do you otherwise require a doctor's note or positive test result, etc.?
- Review hotel guest room cancellation policy and contract clauses
- If you allow the participants to cancel, etc., how would those lost hotel reservations affect the attrition in the group block?

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- Consider signed participant risk waiver. (Seek legal counsel.)
- Review event safety practices – [this resource](#) may be helpful.
- Proceed with pre-planning efforts with the venue (*section III.*)

## Section I-B Event Considerations (You've Decided to Host the Event)

Items to consider when you decide to host an in-person meeting:

- Check the contracts for cancellation wording and obligations (Resource #1)
- Communications
- Cancelling the event (Resource #4)
- Postponing the event (Resource #5)

## Section II. Prospective Participant Communication

- Considerations Post registration form with liability items on your landing page
- Consider:
  - Waiver of Liability Statement (Resource #5)
  - Consent for medical treatment (Resource #6)
  - Statements of Agreement (checkbox "I agree")
- Recommend participants bring and wear their own face coverings for personal protection and in all spaces of the event
- Be sure face coverings and appropriate personal safety gear is available
- Hotel rooms may be based upon single occupancy except for members of the same family/household
  - Set a registration deadline
  - Pre-registration & payment all online in advance
  - Allow for mailing of name badge materials (if applicable)
  - Confirmation & "Know Before You Go" (week of) emails
  - Print-at-home name badge attachment (if applicable)
  - Encourage participants to utilise virtual/app-based networking in place of business cards
  - Communicate commitment of facility and association to ensuring a safe, healthy, and successful event
- Link to facility's webpage regarding pandemic safety and sanitation policy
- Provide an outline of safety measures: "Expectations of Participants"
- Additional health screening information on-site (Resource #10)
- Personal safety gear requirements
- Participants will be encouraged to bring and wear their own face covering for personal protection at all times and in all spaces of the event
- Enhanced Social Distancing – remaining 1 metre apart
- Enhanced Hygiene
  - Wash hands with soap
  - Utilise hand sanitiser
  - Cover mouth
  - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the sleeve
  - Avoid touching face
- Refund policy in case of cancellation (if applicable)
- Plan for no-touch or low-touch registration
- Online/pre-mailed materials highly recommended
- If it is mandatory that you provide hard materials, registration materials and give-away items
- Event Pandemic Risk Coordinator responsible for safe distribution of any provided hard materials
- Name Badges
  - Do not use recycled badge holders/ribbons/supplies
  - Include emergency contact on the back of name badge in case of illness
  - Optional: medical history (if a participant chooses to include it)

*Disclaimer: Putting on a safe meeting may require additional costs, whose corners should not be cut. If you cannot afford electronic or mailed options, perhaps you might not be able afford to host a truly safe meeting.*

### for Pre-Registration

- On-site program options
- Utilise a mobile app

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- Post to the website for participant's reference or print-at-home
- Utilise venue/rental electronic display boards
- Mail in advance
- Limit on-site registration
- Walk-up registration or forgotten mailed materials
- Set up a contactless pickup station
- Spread out registration locations based on last name, etc., to maximise participant safe distancing
- Complete registration form and payment online
- Encourage no paper registration forms, no pens, safe cash handling
- Plan to collect payments in advance
- Work with venues on safe and sanitary table coverings.

### Public Relations / Website / Social Media

- Public Relations Statement surrounding the decision to host the meeting (Resource #10)
- Communicate participant cancellation and penalty policy for pandemic related reasons (if applicable)
- Commitment of facility and association to ensuring a safe, healthy, and successful event
- Link to facility's webpage regarding pandemic safety and sanitation policy • Crisis plan in the event of an outbreak
- Crisis plan for non-compliance or personal protest

### Risk Management Plan

- What to do with Suspected or Confirmed Pandemic Cases
- Does the Venue have a plan created? (Resource #11)
- Emergency contact form to have on hand (Contact information for local Hospital, EMS, Police) (Resource # 13)
- Have a designated isolation room for participant with suspected or confirmed pandemic case to wait in for the next steps
- Incident Reporting
- Partner with venue to establish procedures
- Local Health Department

### Signage

- At the doors of the venue
- Additional health screening information on-site (Resource #9) *-as well as work with local health department*
- Face coverings and personal safety gear required
- Floor decals for flow of traffic
- Around the event
- Outline of safety measures: "Expectations of Participants"
- Personal safety gear requirements
- Participants will be encouraged to bring and wear their own face covering for personal protection and in all spaces of the event
- Enhanced Social Distancing – remaining 1 metre apart
- Enhanced Hygiene
- Wash the hands with soap
- Utilise hand sanitiser
- Cover the mouth

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- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or the sleeve
- Avoid touching the face

### Sponsors & Exhibitors Considerations

- Interactions with participants
- Utilise technology for networking
- Consider on-site event suggestions (later in this document) when deciding on business cards, giveaway items, printed materials at booth
- Sales - maximize contactless and online payments
- Encourage safe distance of 1 metre at all times
- Participant contact list provided electronically (as appropriate)
- Schedule staggered load-in and load-out appointments to minimise crowd in entry/exit ways, loading docks, in and usage of shared loading materials
- Consider the number of representatives that will be allowed per booth space (work with venue and show decorator)
- Social distancing for exhibits



## Section III. Pre-Planning Efforts with Venue

### Facility

- Review venue's Pandemic/Sanitation Plan
- Review how to handle a positive case/symptomatic participant (planner and facility)
- Review participant touch points (Resource #7)

### Public Space

- Signage entering the venue
  - Health screenings
  - Personal safety gear requirements
- Social distancing requirements – 1 metre floor stickers
- Ample sanitiser distribution or stations
- Created space for one-way traffic with directional signage (refer to venue for direction)
- Sanitation Plan / Cleaning Protocols - request the maintenance schedule be posted so participants know what to expect
- Restrooms, water fountains, guest rooms, elevators, public space/lobby, valet/bell service (if applicable)
- Hotel Check-in
- Queue line
- Consider plexiglass dividers
- Guest Rooms
  - Venue may leave guest rooms untouched for a period of time prior to arrival and after departure
  - Limited Housekeeping Service
    - No contact linen, towels, and amenities to guest rooms (ask for venue's sanitation plan)
- Valet Parking/luggage service
  - Is it offered?
    - If so, what are the guidelines?

### Event Space - Meeting Specifics

- Loading dock schedule and procedures
  - Use of venue push carts/dollies – sanitation
  - How to handle materials that are shipped to facility
- Signage entering event space – expectations
  - Health screening
  - Personal safety gear recommendations
- Restrooms
  - Capacity limits, queue line
  - Will someone be staffed outside of entrance
- Include hand sanitiser stations
- Food Service
  - Refer to your venue for safe meal advice
  - Staggered break times
  - All pre-packaged and individual items

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- bread, butter, salt, pepper, sugar, creamers, salad dressing, etc.
- Personal safety gear for service staff
- Multiple locations for meal service
- Bar Service
  - Increase number of bars (based on venue space, number of participants and government guidelines)
  - Queue line
  - Is cash allowed to be exchanged? If so, use safe cash handling processes.
- Diagrams/Layout
  - Number of people vs. square metre of space
    - General session rooms
- Banquet seating – defer to venue floor plans
  - Breakout session rooms
- Consider theatre or classroom style seating to maximise distancing and avoid shared surfaces
- Stream programming video feed across multiple break out rooms to maximise participant safe distancing
  - Designated entrance and exit for meeting rooms
  - Utilise open-air spaces (outdoor, etc.) to hold programming when feasible
- Exhibit Space - Control capacity inside exhibit hall based on square footage
- Setup considerations:
  - Aisles Space
  - One-way aisles
  - Widen aisles for two-way traffic
  - Space between booths
  - Consider plexiglass dividers
  - Social distance 6ft floor stickers

## Resources

### Resource 1 - Contract language sample

*"The performance of the Agreement by either party shall be subject to force majeure, including but not limited to acts of God, fire, flood, natural disaster, war or threat of war, acts or threats of terrorism, civil disorder, unauthorised strikes, governmental regulation or advisory, recognized health threats as determined by the World Health Organisation, the Centers for Disease Control, or local government authority or health agencies (including infectious diseases), curtailment of transportation facilities, or other similar occurrence beyond the control of the parties, where any of those factors, circumstances, situations, or conditions or similar ones prevent, dissuade, or unreasonably delay prospective event participants from attending, or where any of them make it illegal, impossible, inadvisable, or commercially impracticable to hold the Event or to fully perform the terms of the Agreement. The Agreement may be cancelled by either party, without liability, damages, fees, or penalty, and any unused deposits or amounts paid shall be refunded, for any one or more of the above reasons, by written notice to the other party."*

### Resource 2 - Sample Survey

"For the past two months, we have been in discussion with our venue in \_\_\_\_\_ regarding the feasibility of holding the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting during \_\_\_\_\_. One option under consideration with our venue is rescheduling the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting to later in the year. The location would remain the same.

A lot of our decisions will be based on first and foremost, the safety of our members, staff, service providers, and family members.

If the decision is made to host the event on either date, we would follow any Governor ordered protocols, along with enhanced safety efforts both in the event planning, event execution, and with facility operations. The \_\_\_\_\_ has put together a pandemic sanitation plan that addresses all areas of their operation. Our event planner will also follow all suggested Responsible Conferencing in New Zealand guidelines.

Please take this short survey to help us determine what is the best course of action for the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting.

1. For the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting, my status is:

\_\_\_\_ I am a member that typically attends.

\_\_\_\_ I am a staff member that typically attends.

\_\_\_\_ I am a service provider that typically attends. \_\_\_\_ I had no plans to attend.

2. If we hold the event on the originally scheduled dates (insert dates), would you attend?

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

3. If no, what is the reason? \_\_\_\_ I don't typically attend.

\_\_\_\_ I am considered high risk.

\_\_\_\_ I am staying home until a treatment/vaccine is available.

\_\_\_\_ My employer would not allow me.

\_\_\_\_ Other. Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

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4. *If we reschedule the event for later in the year, would you attend?*

Yes

No

5. *If no, what is the reason?  I don't typically attend.*

I am considered high risk.

I am staying home until a treatment/vaccine is available.

My employer would not allow me.

It would depend on the dates.

Other. Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. *If we found it necessary to limit the size of the event for either date option, and families could not attend, would you attend?*

Yes

No

7. *We might consider offering the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting as an online program if we are not able to make the rescheduled dates work. If we were to offer an online program, it would most likely be broken up into 20-minute sessions. The sessions would be recorded, so you could watch them on your own time.*

*What would be your preference for the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting if we are able to offer a choice?*

I prefer having the in-person meeting rather than moving the meeting online.

I would prefer the online version.

I had no plans to attend either way.

8. *Please share with us any additional comments regarding the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate your input!"

### Resource 3 - Sample Cancellation Wording

"Due to ongoing concerns about the current pandemic, we have made the difficult decision to cancel \_\_\_\_\_ scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_. Our members, supporters and employees are our top priority and we strongly believe this is the right decision given the current circumstances. Our thoughts are with those directly impacted by this situation."

### Resource 4 - Sample Postponement Wording

"The health and safety of our members, staff and guests is our top priority. Therefore, we have decided to postpone the \_\_\_\_\_ event at this time. We will be in contact when the event has been rescheduled.

We understand that it is a difficult time for many. We are hopeful that things will improve so that we can move forward with the \_\_\_\_\_ event at a future time."

### Resource 5 – Sample Waiver

Waiver of liability on registration materials

"I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that by registering for \_\_\_\_\_ I will indemnify and hold harmless \_\_\_\_\_ (Association), its volunteers, employees, and others working on behalf of

\_\_\_\_\_ (Association) against any and all claims, demands, suits, or loss, including all costs connected therewith, and for any damages which may be asserted, claimed, or

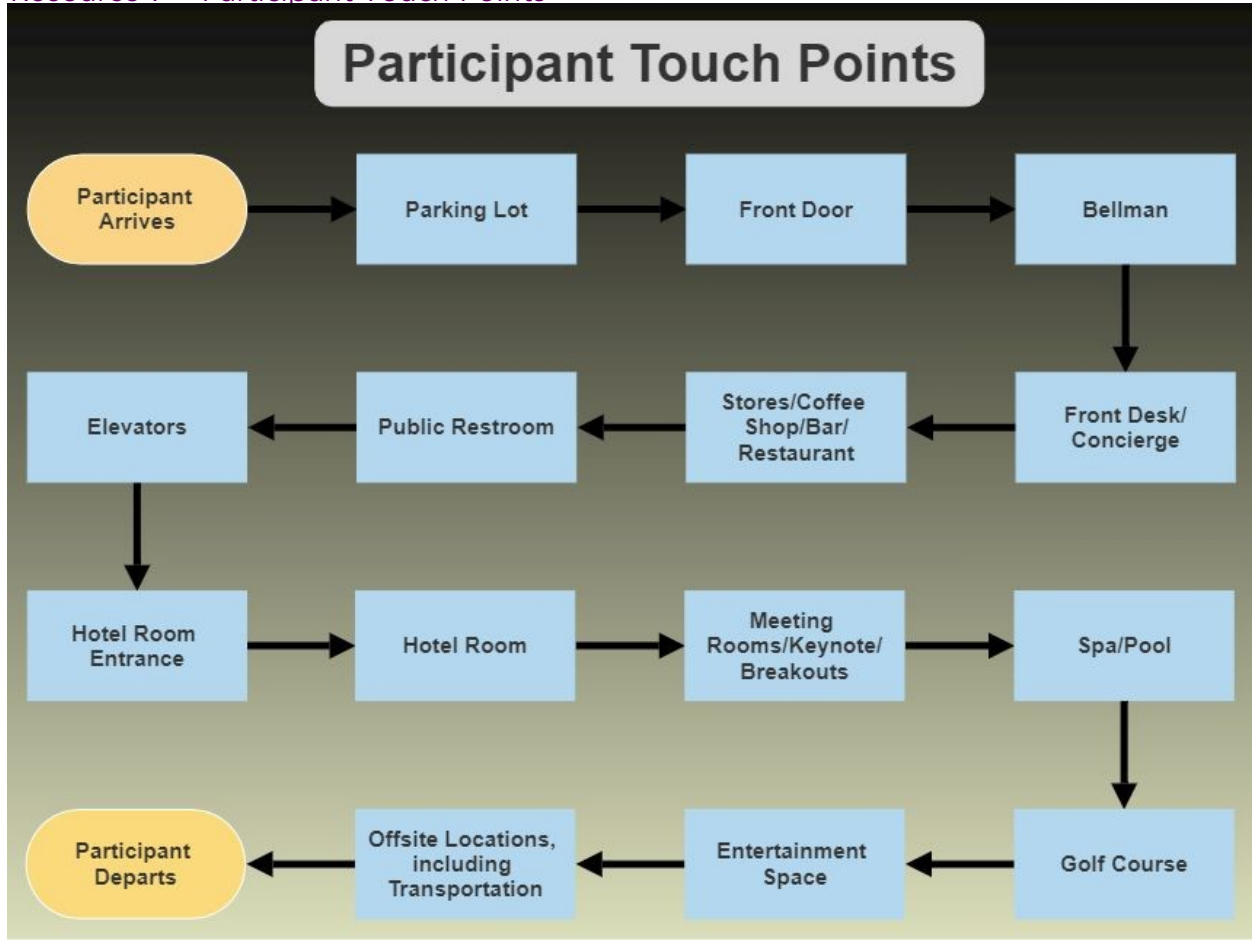
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recovered against or from \_\_\_\_\_ (Association), including loss of life, as a result of the pandemic.”

### Resource 6 – Sample Consent for Medical Treatment

“Should I show symptoms of the virus while attending \_\_\_\_\_, I authorise any licensed doctor, nurse, emergency medical technician, paramedic, hospital, or other medical facility to provide treatment to me. I authorise said professionals to perform any procedure that they deem advisable.”

### Resource 7 – Participant Touch Points



### Resource 8 – Sample Event Pandemic Risk Coordinator Responsibilities Role and Responsibilities

1. Audit current processes and procedures to define and analyse possible risks
2. Evaluate the severity of each risk by considering its consequences
3. Develop controls, systems and processes to reduce the possibility of a pandemic
4. Create contingency plans to manage occurrences
5. Prepare reports and present recommendations
6. Help implement solutions and plans
7. Evaluate employees' risk awareness and train them when necessary

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8. Educate and enforce the risk policies that have been implemented

### Resource 9 – Sample Participant Screening Questions

In order to attend the event, I affirm that in the past 24 hours, I have not experienced:

\_\_\_\_\_ An atypical cough  
\_\_\_\_\_ Atypical shortness of breath  
the following: Any of  
\_\_\_\_\_ Fever of 37.8 degrees C, or above  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chills/Repeated Shaking  
\_\_\_\_\_ Muscle Pain  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sore Throat  
\_\_\_\_\_ Headache  
\_\_\_\_\_ New or Loss of Taste or Smell

If you answer “yes” to any of the symptoms listed above, you will not be permitted to attend the event. Please quarantine at home and contact your health care provider for direction.

- You should isolate at home for a minimum of 14 days since symptoms first appear.
- You must also have 3 days without fever and improvement in respiratory symptoms.

In the past 14 days have you:

\_\_\_\_\_ Had close contact (within 1 metre for a prolonged period of time) with someone with a diagnosis of the virus?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Traveled internationally or domestically?

If you answer “yes” to either of these questions, you are not permitted to attend the event. Self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

If no to all of the above, you are permitted to attend the event. You will be asked to follow the appropriate personal safety gear protocol instituted by the event planner.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to follow all personal safety gear protocol instituted by the event planner.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Resource 10 - Sample Communications

**How to respond with members that agree or do not agree with the decision.** *Tailor content to individual associations.*

#### **We ARE holding the event Participant Agrees:**

(Association name) appreciates your support. Please know that we are following guidelines set forth by Government health agencies as outlined in the Responsible Conferencing in New Zealand best practices document. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated in following these protocols before and during our (meeting/event/outing).

#### ***Participant Disagrees:***

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The health and well-being of participants is our top priority. In making the decision to move forward, we are following guidelines set forth by Government health & human service agencies as outlined in the Responsible Conferencing in New Zealand best practices document.

### **We are NOT holding the event**

#### ***Participant Agrees:***

We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you at (event name) in the future!

#### ***Participant Disagrees:***

After careful discussion of every aspect of the meeting, (association name) has made the difficult decision to (postpone/cancel/move to virtual) the (event name). As excited as we were to put on this (meeting/event/outing) face to face, the public health and safety of our participants, staff, and volunteers outweighed any other considerations in our collective decision-making process. We appreciate the support and look forward to seeing you at (event name) in the future.

### Resource 11 – Denial of Entry

If the Secondary Screening confirms that the participant has a temperature above 37.8°C and/or is displaying or complaining of the known symptoms of the pandemic, the participant may be denied entry to the property and be directed towards medical care and provided with resources and recommendations based on Government and local health authority guidelines.

A Security Supervisor might collect basic participant information including the Health Declaration, names of room shared, close contact guests in their traveling group, and the participant's travel history. If a participant refuses to provide information or cooperate with Security, the participant may be denied entry to the property.

Participants who are displaying the symptoms should NOT be directed to use public transportation, taxis, Uber, Lyft or other shared transportation options.