



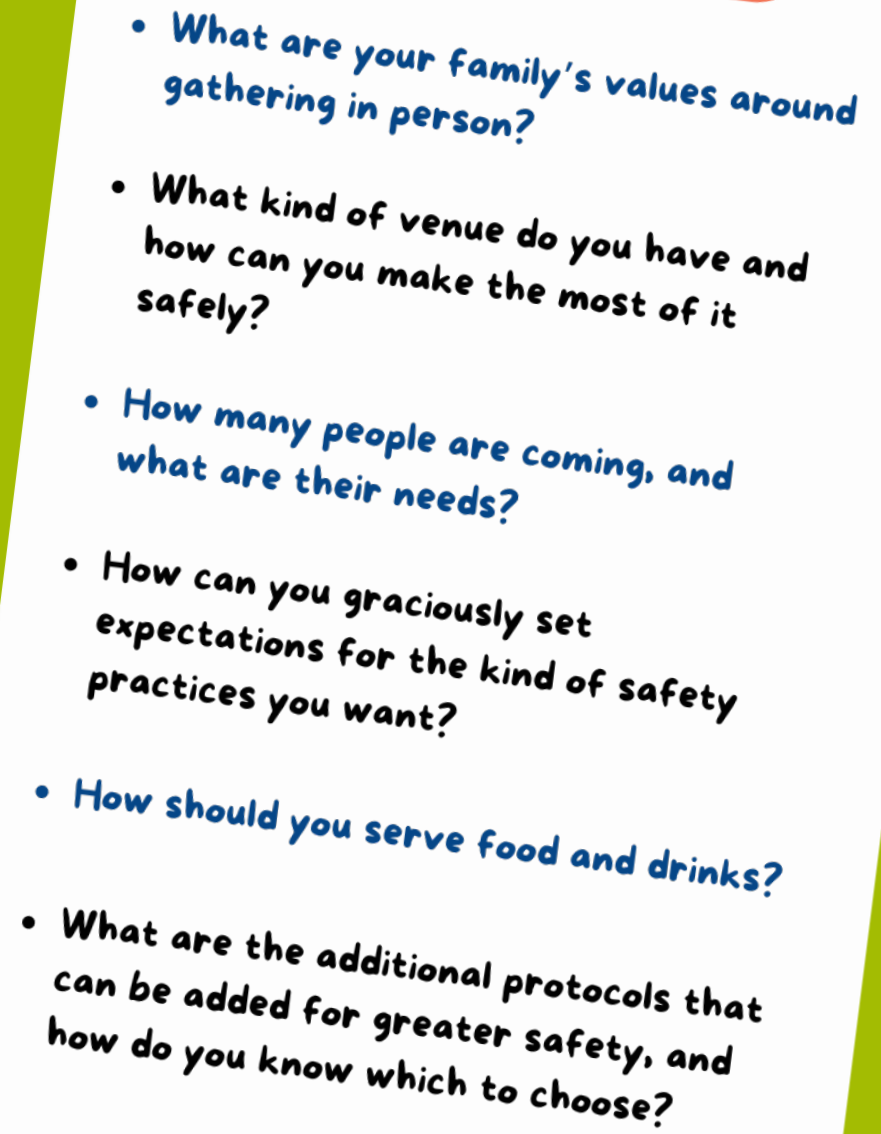
# **Keeping Our 'Ohana Safe**

*Decision-Making Guidance for Large Group Gatherings In The Time Of COVID-19*

# Introduction:

As we ***learn to live with COVID-19 as a part of our reality***, we need to be able to make decisions for ourselves, our families and our community that will allow us to keep our loved ones safe while we live our lives, engage in cultural practice, and gather together with our 'ohana and friends.

Government mandates will come and go; as case counts and variants continue to change, ***this guide is here to offer a framework for decisions you can make for yourself when considering a large gathering:***

- 
- What are your family's values around gathering in person?
  - What kind of venue do you have and how can you make the most of it safely?
  - How many people are coming, and what are their needs?
  - How can you graciously set expectations for the kind of safety practices you want?
  - How should you serve food and drinks?
  - What are the additional protocols that can be added for greater safety, and how do you know which to choose?

# Planning Ahead:

## What can we do to set ourselves up for success?

**We need to learn how to move forward with COVID-19 as a reality of life – but not let it hold us back from fully living.**

Our local community thrives because of the bonds between us, and getting together is an important part of what makes us happy and healthy as people in our culture. When we gather with our friends, family and neighbors, important healing takes place from the past years of pandemic pressures and tragic loss. As we do so, it's important that we make some small adjustments to our event plans to be safe and responsible moving forward.

One community leader put it like this: *"We don't want the house to catch fire, which is why we have smoke alarms."*

If we install some changes to our gatherings to proactively prevent transmission of the virus, we'll be able to keep the house from catching fire again, and keep our community healthy and whole.



# Planning Tips!

1

As you're making your plans, know that **there are a lot of resources available**, including public health experts who are happy to answer your questions. Don't hesitate to ask -- if you're wondering, odds are, lots of others are wondering too.



2

As you work through the event planning process, **talk to the folks in your group who normally set the tone for how people behave around them** – kupuna especially – and make the COVID safety plan for your event together. Encourage them to share expectations with others who will be there.



3

**Consider offering an alternative way for folks to participate**, like zoom, facetime or pre-recording a video to be played at the event. That way, people have an easier time choosing to stay home if they have symptoms.



# Planning Tips!

**When we take the time to gather or celebrate, we have more opportunities to protect the health of our community than just COVID prevention.**

We can make choices that help prevent other health issues that have made our communities vulnerable to COVID-19 complications, like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Choose menus that are based on our cultures and healthy for our bodies, and hold events that allow us to be outdoors, active, and engaged.



# Where we going?

## Venues for getting together:

If you have a choice, **spacious outdoor areas – or indoor/outdoor style venues – are always the best choice for COVID safety.**

But many times, the specific venue we're choosing for the gathering is important because of a special significance, which can mean other considerations come into play for your plan.

**A great choice is the park!**

- ✓ Outdoors
- ✓ Well-Ventilated
- ✓ Open space to comfortably hold a large group



# Tips on Choosing a Venue

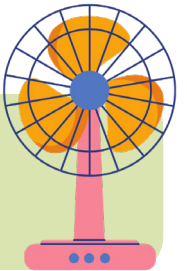
1

**Decide on the number of attendees** based on how many people the venue can comfortably and safely accommodate – including the ability to have some space between groups of people when seated. This means you'd want less people than the technical capacity of the space. Perhaps this means that you pick a venue that's a little bit bigger than what you would otherwise need.



2

**Do what you can to increase ventilation.** Open up the doors and windows and bring in fans to keep air flowing.



3

**Make sure there's a good sanitation setup** for hand washing, especially if you're serving food. If there aren't many easily-accessed sinks, provide hand sanitizer stations or bottles of hand sanitizer at each table.



4

**Ask for the venue's COVID safety protocols to make sure your standards are the same.** Does your plan follow their rules? Do their staff and venue protocols meet your safety needs?



# Who's Coming?

**Who are the guests, volunteers, and other folks filling the space?**

The most important part of any event is the opportunity for people to come together. **In our local culture we take our responsibility seriously: to take good care of the folks we welcome.**

***One size does not fit all when it comes to events these days, so there are a few things to think through based on who your event is for.***





# Who's Coming?

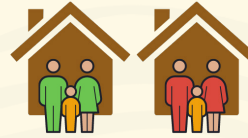
LESS RISK

HIGHER RISK

## Social Groups



Members of the **same household** attending an event together



Friends and 'ohana from **different households**, but the **same social bubbles** gathering (school, sports team, work)



People attending from **different households** and **different social bubbles**

## Age & Health



Younger/Healthy Group



Groups including kūpuna

## Number of people



Gathering with **less than 10 people**

Gathering with **more than 100 people**



If your event looks more like the left side of the chart, observing safe practices like masking and staying home when sick is a good baseline.

If your event looks more like the right side of the chart, it's a good idea to layer in more checks for safety to make sure you're doing the right thing to keep your loved ones healthy.

# Who's Coming?

## Some questions to ask as you're thinking about who will be there:

- ❓ Does the venue have employees you'll be interacting with? Are they masked, vaccinated, or tested?
- ❓ Can you have households sit together, and does the venue allow for space in between the tables?
- ❓ If the headcount is feeling like a lot for the space that you have, are you able to stagger the event, so some groups come earlier and some later?
- ❓ If you have kupuna or immunocompromised people coming, is there enough room for them to socially-distance safely?



### Ho'olewa (Funeral)

In late 2021, in the lull between the Delta and Omicron surges, a celebration of life was held for a beloved community leader and young mother. Thousands were expected, so organizers chose an outdoor venue, mandated on-site testing for all attendees, staggered arrivals to limit the number on site at any time, and organized as a drive-through to ensure distancing between households.

The celebration was beautiful and there were no known COVID cases from the event.

# How to Act:



## Setting Expectations. *"Like taking off your shoes before you come inside the house. This is what we do now."*

How do we support each other as we move forward? There are many opinions on how to act and what to do, and in some cases, we can agree to disagree and still be respectful of each others' choices. It's a basic truth – we live on an island, and people will be part of our social circles and our families no matter what. Be respectful and honor Pacific values in our exchanges.

### PRE-PARTY PROTOCOL

When you send out the invite, it's a great chance to make sure everyone is on the same page coming into the event. In your invitation, you can:

- Encourage people to stay home if they feel sick and test ahead of time if in doubt. It is an example of respect for the host and the other attendees to opt out if there's a possibility of spreading germs.
- Provide a symptom list for self-checks:

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Fever
- ☐ Scratchy Throat
- ☐ Upset Stomach
- ☐ Runny Nose

*If you checked off any of the boxes please send your aloha from home*

- Tell people up front what the social expectation is for safety at the event. For example:



The family will be wearing masks during greetings (like when folks arrive or during a procession line) until it's time to eat



We will have hand sanitizer and extra high-quality masks in case you need one

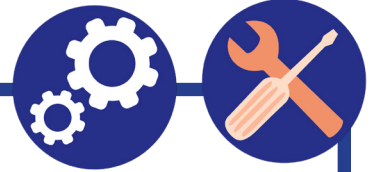


We will be taking temperatures upon arrival

- If people don't have access to a rapid test but are willing to take one, consider sending one over prior to the event



# How to Act:



## EVENT TOOLKIT

### What to bring:

- ☐ Hand sanitizer bottles
- ☐ A box of high-quality disposable masks
- ☐ Rapid antigen tests
- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ A box of gloves – just in case

### How to use it:

Hold **masks** at the check-in area, to offer to folks who didn't bring or could use a new one

Offer **hand sanitizer** at the start of food service, after holding hands for pule

If there is someone that says they're feeling sick or is coughing/sneezing, offer a **rapid test** and use **gloves** while helping them



*To make masks and hand sanitizer part of the party, consider personalizing them for the event as gifts/favors.*

# PARTY TIME!

**During the event, you can reduce risk with simple actions along the way:**

- **Encourage masks** when talking story before and after mealtime
- **Offer hand sanitizer in convenient places** like on food tables, next to high-touch areas (like door handles or guest books), or at the corners farthest from handwashing sinks to make it easy for people to keep hands clean

# Come and Eat!

## Considerations for serving food and drinks:

If possible, a good way to go is **food plates or bento boxes that are made ahead of time, covered, and shared with each individual guest**. But if that isn't realistic, think about the following ways to minimize the number of folks coming into contact with shared food and drinks:



Have a **designated serving person** as the only one who stands by the shared item and helps folks with their portions. **He or she should use gloves and wear a mask.**



For events and ceremonies that might normally use shared vessels, multiply out the supply. **Ensure participants each have their own implement**; designate only one that touches the shared item, then transfers it to the individual implements without touching them together.



## Sharing 'Awa

While traditions for preparation and serving 'awa differ throughout Polynesia, the practice is an important way to honor people and mark milestones together. To continue the practice safely, one 'awa circle during the Omicron surge made small adjustments that, while not traditional, made it possible for the gathering to occur with minimal risk to the participants. Each person used their own individual 'apu rather than sharing. The server had a different 'apu, and poured from this serving 'apu into each individual's 'apu to drink. Each person sat six feet from the next, so that when they unmasked to drink they were still distanced safely; the person serving kept his mask on throughout.

# Just to make sure...

## Layers of safety you can add on if your event is happening at a time when:

1. COVID case counts are increasing in the community
2. Kupuna or vulnerable folks are planning to attend
3. You've got a big crowd that might be a little too close for comfort
4. ...or anything else that makes you want a few extra layers of safety

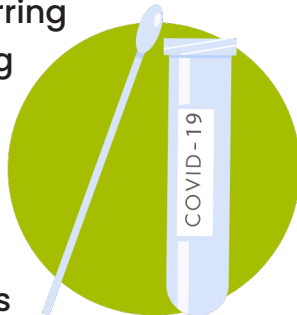
### Ask for vaccine status:

You can include a check box question on your RSVP form, request a copy of vaccine proof to be sent in, or have folks show their vaccine cards upon arrival.



### Encourage testing:

Ask all attendees, regardless of vaccine status, to take a COVID test within 24-48 hours before the event, or use a rapid test upon arrival. For large events, support from trusted testing providers might be an option. For recurring gatherings, consider an ongoing testing program for at least 10% of the group that could be done every week or every other week. This is also a great idea for in-person workplaces, teams, clubs or social groups.



### Use symptom checks & temperature screening:

Either before arrival or at event check-in, ask guests to confirm verbally whether they're experiencing any common COVID symptoms, been asked to quarantine, or are waiting on the results of a recent COVID test. While not foolproof, doing a temperature screening with a scan-type thermometer is another helpful tool to ensure folks are feeling healthy coming into the event. For anyone unwell, offering a rapid test or an at-home way to participate in the event are good next steps.



### Contact Tracing:

Keeping track of who attends your event is a good practice – not only for sending thank-you notes, but also to make sure you can contact folks if you do find out there was a COVID contact at the event.

