

Today's Duty of Care

Amanda Schleede, CEO, Attend Safe



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How We Got Here

Following a December 2019 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2, also known as SARS-CoV-2, in Wuhan, China, the World Health Organization declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on Jan. 30, 2020, and a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

As this goes to press, there have been more than 567 million COVID-19 infections and nearly 6.4 million confirmed COVID-19 deaths. For a scale of reference, COVID-19's current fatality rate is like having a new 9/11 every week.

It's estimated to be the fifth deadliest pandemic in recorded history, behind the Black Death of 1346 to 1353, the "Spanish" Flu of 1918 to 1920, the Plague of Justinian of 541-549, and HIV/AIDS, which began in 1981 remains ongoing.

Where We Stand

On heat maps, most U.S. states fall into the Red categories, indicating high risk of infection. The exceptions are several New England states, which are in the Yellow or medium infection risk categories.

A combination of "pandemic fatigue," lawsuits, threats of bodily harm and other factors have resulted in many public health departments abandoning their early strategies of mandating risk mitigation measures as conditions ebbed and flowed, and instead adopting a program of simply recommending that businesses and the general public follow CDC recommendations.

Most often, the public ignores those CDC recommendations. Many businesses do, too.

As a reminder, in High Risk areas, the CDC recommends wearing masks in indoor public spaces and public transportation, staying current with COVID-19 vaccinations and booster shots based on age (over/under 50), getting tested if exhibiting any symptoms, and taking additional precautions for individuals at higher risk for severe illness, such as those with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis, diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, a weakened immune system, or other conditions.

Live Events

The events space continues to work toward restoring something resembling normal life, while working through the challenges presented by the lack of clear guidance from many local and regional health departments.

In the recent, ongoing surge in cases of the BA.5 sub-variant of Omicron, and its follow-on surge in hospitalizations and ICU cases, some areas have called for a return to mask mandates for crowded indoor spaces, but most lack the political will to shift from recommendation to mandate. As a result, event-based outbreaks have proliferated (aka super-spreader events).

Daily symptom tracking and temperature checking have gone by the wayside. Vaccination confirmations continue to be a go-to for many events. Knowing the vaccination versus unvaccinated rate of your attendees in valuable data when making decisions regarding the health and safety of your attendees. The key is testing, testing, testing! Vaccines prevent deaths while testing preserves health.

What Can Event Planners Do? Test

When coronavirus vaccinations first rolled out, it seemed like we could all exhale and get back to normal. Sadly, we were wrong.

Today's reality is that vaccines are like a seatbelt: they're protection for when something happens. If the sole risk mitigation procedure in place for an event is vaccination verification, it's more of a reassurance that people probably won't die. But we should strive for more.

Testing is like a car's crash avoidance systems — it's a means toward preventing something from happening, a way to avoid seeing how much protection those seat belts really offer.

Establish Event Protocols Early

When you begin planning for your event, it's important to decide on your protocols and be up front with potential attendees about what they are. You can't have people getting off a plane, showing up at a venue, and then getting surprised with your risk mitigation plans. For example, you may decide that if on-site testing reaches a 10% positivity rate, a mask mandate will apply in public indoor space, and that reaching a 20% positivity rate will mean indoor programs will be moved outdoors or online instead. If the worst happens, then nobody will be surprised about what comes next. You might even want to share your Plan B and Plan C protocols, so people know you're putting thought into their safety. It's OK to



tell people, "This is our plan, we may need to change it as events unfold, but this is it right now." People know that things can, and do, change suddenly.

Being able to show potential attendees that you have contingency plans will give them confidence that you will be able to provide the experience in a thoughtful, professional way, that you take their safety seriously, and that you recognize your duty of care to the people you're bringing together.

The Role of Leadership

Leadership needs to be consistent in both their words and in their deeds. There can be no exceptions for your plans to be effective — the whole team must be on board. If masks must be worn, leaders can't walk around without one (or with it worn in a haphazard way). If daily testing is required to enter a site, they cannot skip the line. "Do as I say, not as I do," does not apply in this situation. Mixed messaging from leadership has caused a lot of problems throughout the pandemic, and most likely a lot of deaths.

Leadership must speak with one voice and act in unison — someone in a leadership role flouting rules and ignoring what's expected of others isn't just a bad leader ("I'm above the rules"), he or she is putting the event's whole risk mitigation plan in doubt ("If a boss doesn't do it, why should I?").

Protocols and On-site Staff

Venue employees, contractors, vendors and anyone else who will be on-site are another concern that must be addressed during



the planning and long before the first participants arrive. When working through site agreements, be sure to understand whether or not your event team will have control over the protocols that will apply to those critical people. There can be an added degree of difficulty if the event is at a union site, and may require working with the union leadership as well as site management.

These things must be agreed upon — in writing — during the planning stages for the event. You can't risk having attendees show up — vaccinated, tested and wearing masks — while other people with site access are engaging in none of your carefully planned protocols. If you don't have an agreement, you could find yourself powerless to stop someone.

Make sure the range of your ability to impose your safety measures is spelled out and documented by all necessary parties.

Duty of Care

"What did you do to protect this event and your attendees?"

"Did you test them before entering the site?"

"Did you test them after the first day?"

"Did you retest people at any time during the week?"

"Did you require masks when positive cases appeared?"

If someone develops a COVID-19 infection and dies, those are the questions the lawyers will ask, and if you've done nothing, despite CDC and other health guidance, you'll have trouble explaining yourself in court.

Attend Safe Can Help

Attend Safe has experience protecting in-person events across the globe. With each event, we've honed our skills, adapted to changing conditions, and monitored the ongoing twists and turns of the pandemic. If you're looking for risk mitigation experts, we're ready to help.

Here are some of the services we can provide to our partners:

- Vaccine and test verification services (monitored in a HIPAA-compliant environment)
- Pandemic response consulting with a team of health care professionals
- At-home rapid antigen testing services (EUA OTC approved) shipped directly to attendees
- On-site rapid antigen and isothermal molecular testing (rapid PCR, NAAT/RT - authorized departure test to meet international travel guidelines)
- Take-home testing services to allow attendees to monitor post-event infections

You say when and where and we will be there: From our Chicago headquarters, we can dispatch a team across the globe, even on short notice. Let us attend to managing risk, while you attend to life.

Amanda Schleele is founder and CEO of Attend Safe, which helps people to attend to life with sensible safety protocols. Visit Attend Safe online at AttendSafe.com.



The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau provides unique offerings with gorgeous, cutting-edge meeting spaces close to vibrant multicultural neighborhoods as well as world-class beaches, restaurants, shops, culture, and entertainment. Create meetings that impress attendees in a tropical metropolis ready to be explored after meetings are done. With a wide range of activities and experiences available, there's something for everyone.

In the Miami Beach Convention Center District enjoy exploring one of the most unique shopping districts in the U.S. on Lincoln Road, stroll down the luxurious and historic Collins Avenue, catch a show at The Fillmore or New World Symphony, sample some of the delicious and diverse cuisines, or admire international contemporary art at the Bass Museum.

Personalize the Miami Beach Convention Center to fit your event's needs. Take advantage of the flexible indoor and outdoor spaces—made up of over 180,000 square feet of meeting space, a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom, 84 breakout rooms, a breathtaking terrace, and 6 acres of green space—to add Miami's signature sunshine to your event year-round. Elevate your event with our state-of-the-art technology that allows for seamless hybrid or virtual events.

Scheduled to open in 2025, the deluxe 800-room Miami Beach Convention Center Headquarter Hotel will be directly connected to the Miami Beach Convention Center, adding a new level of convenience to meeting planning. This comes in addition to the range of luxury hotels we currently offer.

About The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) is an accredited not-for-profit sales and marketing organization whose mission is to attract visitors for leisure, business, and conventions.

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Royal Caribbean International has been delivering unrivaled services, incredible experiences, and unforgettable event memories for over 40 years. They pride themselves for being able to give guests access to the most exotic locations around the world while being able to maintain safety and security. That is why, in the last 42 years, Royal Caribbean has exceeded what is required by regulatory authorities—these are all a part of our ongoing commitment to innovation and continuous improvement in every aspect of our business. An example are conductions of muster drill at the beginning of every cruise, to ensure guests are familiar with what to do and where to go in the unlikely event of an emergency. Above all, our entire fleet were designed with policies created by the International Maritime Organization, which regulates global safety and operation of cruise ships. Regulations are rigorous and are constantly being optimized for protection of crew members and guests alike.

As a countermeasure to COVID-19 Royal Caribbean takes great pride in keeping their ships sparkling clean. Their evolved sanitization protocols use EPA-certified disinfectants and techniques like electrostatic fogging to clean frequently and consistently. The HVAC system onboard continuously supplies 100% fresh, filtered air from outdoors to all indoor spaces. You can breathe easy knowing that, thanks to this robust system, the transmission of aerosol particles between spaces (like those from a cough) is extremely low to virtually impossible — as validated in an independent assessment conducted by the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the National Strategic Research Institute on board a Royal Caribbean ship. In addition, they've made their high-quality onboard medical care stronger than ever, with more doctors and nurses on each ship and state-of-the-art equipment enhancements.

About Royal Caribbean International

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