**Global Adventures Covid-19 Policy Discussion – 11-12-24**

***What is the problem we are trying to address with this policy?***

Participants on multiple trips have contracted covid and other respiratory viruses from other group members during their trip, impacting their experience and sometimes leaving them to bring covid home to vulnerable family members.

***Information about the problem:***

* *COVID is now endemic and continues to spread in waves (like this past summer) and we're just going to have to deal with that reality.*
* *Vaccines, masking and physical distancing have proven to be effective at reducing the spread of covid. Vaccines need to be periodically boosted to remain effective.*
* *Airports and long flights on airplanes as well as crowded common spaces, vans/buses and sleeping rooms are places where covid can spread significantly in the absence of masking.*
* *We have set up a policy in which people are asked (required!) to be up to date with preventive vaccines, mask during transit, self-test proactively at the onset of significant symptoms, and then wear a mask and isolate or physically distance themselves from healthy roommates and others until they no longer have a fever and their symptoms have subsided.*
* *Every group member since the policy was developed has been informed of these expectations and have confirmed in their trip agreement that they understand and will follow the policy, but some people have not followed the policy and subsequently appear to have spread covid to others in the group.*
  + *The elements most commonly not followed are masking on the way to the trip, proactively reporting symptoms, and taking proactive actions such as self-testing, masking up and distancing as soon as symptoms appear.*
  + *People are quick to dismiss symptoms as being something other than covid*
* *There could be situations where it’s hard for us to completely isolate a person. But other participants need to understand that complete isolation isn’t possible.*
* *There is currently no tracking or enforcement mechanism for compliance with the policy.*
* *The Mountaineers own Covid-19 policy gives trip leaders the latitude to employ preventive restrictions that they believe are necessary, as long as they don’t violate the club’s ethics policy (from Arina Abbott).*
* *Our policy expectations are similar to that of other adventure travel organizations (see Curtis’s summary document).*
* *There is a sense by at least one reviewer that our policy is expressed or implemented in a punitive and/or ‘shaming’ way that is inappropriate and may inhibit people from speaking up when they start to experience symptoms.*

***What is the goal of our policy?***

*Starting point:*To define and communicate a set ofreasonable and impactful measures for our group members to follow in the immediate buildup to the trip and during the trip to manage an infection in order to reduce the likelihood that they will contract and spread covid-19 around their group.

* Participants take steps to reduce their chance of infection
* Guide leaders in how to respond to an infection to reduce the impact
* Communicate our policy to participants and set reasonable expectations for what will be asked of them and what they can expect of others

***We want our policy to have the following attributes:***

* Minimize judgment and shaming around {getting} a COVID infection. It's everywhere, millions of people continue to get it.
* Emphasize support for continuing the trip, as much as possible. This should reduce the incentive to hide an infection.
* Avoid draconian "isolation" practices and language, which often sound like banishment. This should also help reduce hiding infections.
  + Making someone leave the trip would be an example
  + If someone can keep up with the group without creating risk for the group then we want to support them to continue
* Prepare for incidents where doing the day's activity might not be feasible {for someone with covid}.
* Emphasizes everyone’s personal responsibility to take care of and avoid harm to themselves and others whenever possible/reasonable to do so.
* Don’t create a heavy burden on the trip leader to find and arrange alternate lodgings, meals and transport for infected people in their group.

**With these thoughts in mind, let’s scrutinize and revise** [**our current policy language**](https://www.mountaineers.org/about/vision-leadership/board-of-directors/committees/mountaineers-global-adventures-committee/procedures-forms/covid-19-policy-global-adventures-10-17-23.docx/@@download/file/COVID%20GA%20Policy%20Updated_21%20Sept%2024.docx.pdf)**.**