

# ***Guidelines for Gathering Together***

## **The Hands & Voices 2021 Leadership Conference.**

### **Franklin, Tennessee**

After careful consideration, and collaboration with our H&V HQ Board, staff, and Chapter hosts, the leadership of Hands & Voices has diligently planned how best to ensure your safety and comfort in attending our Annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference.

In recognition of those that we serve, as well as our own families and one another, Hands & Voices has established the following guidelines for our time together. We are ready to get back together in person and know that as we come together with respect for one another, we will do great! We are aware that every person will have a different level of comfort being with a large group of people, and while providing this guidance, we want to encourage you to consider your own needs, as well as others, in this collective setting.

Our guidance is based on current trends with the pandemic and is pulled from the CDC, national, state, and local area recommendations and requirements. Additionally, the guidance was created, conceived, and developed through the collective agreement of our H&V HQ Board and Staff for our community and organization.

#### **Respect for each of our attendees has been established through:**

- Creating more opportunities outdoors: longer breaks, options for eating outside, and all uptime activities are outside
- Keeping conference under capacity to allow for social distancing
- Modifying the layout of rooms for social distancing
- Making hand sanitizer stations readily available
- Availability of clear masks for all participants (see below)
- Additional considerations for our community members who are Deaf/HH will be available to ensure accessibility
- Food service handling protocol followed by the hotel staff for guests
- Wiping/sanitizing of handheld mics, podium, laptop, and remote clickers before and after each speaker
- Hotel safety guidance in place: <https://whattoexpect.marriott.com/bnacs>

#### **The following guidelines will be in place at our event:**

- 1. We are strongly recommending that masks be worn at our conference (regardless of vaccination status) and ask that you wear the clear masks that will be provided to accommodate our Deaf/Hard of hearing participants. Even these masks are not perfect for communication, so be mindful of noise muffling.**
  - a. Exceptions: during active eating; on the stage with social distancing maintained during presentations; outside with social distancing
  - b. We will have available areas outside for breaks and eating. This is an excellent strategy to get a break from the masks and also get your daily Vitamin D from the sun.
  - c. Knowing that mask-wearing can be fatiguing for all and in particular for community members with access needs, we are seeking to create a rhythm within our conference at

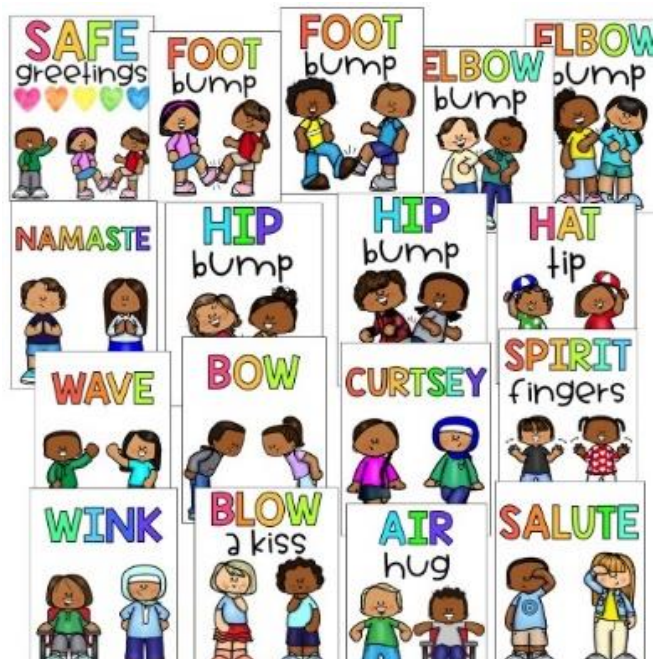
a pace that does not exhaust! While the clear masks help with speechreading, attendees are reminded to speak up while using a mask for those who also rely on auditory information. Upon the agreement of both, masks could also be lowered to increase understanding if social distancing is maintained.

- d. We know that there are sometimes exceptions, considerations, and personal preferences about the types of masks, so we trust you will make good decisions regarding this. You may bring your own mask(s). Please contact us with any questions.

2. **Do not come to the conference if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, are waiting for COVID-19 test results, have COVID-19 symptoms, or if you have had close contact with a person who has tested positive for or who has symptoms of COVID-19. If you are feeling sick, do not come to the conference, and/or separate yourself from others if you are feeling unwell once you arrive. Please let us know during the conference if you need help with your hotel room situation for isolation purposes.**

#### Additional thoughts:

- Please be aware that the choices people have made for themselves, and their families, are personal, and this will be a *no-judgment/let kindness rule* gathering. We also acknowledge that the pandemic is a corporate experience.... WE are a diverse group in the decisions we make individually, and as a society. Please keep this in mind in our conversations with one another; we do appreciate you following our guidelines for this space and time.
- Be respectful of distancing; we think the “*Hands & Voices Elbow-to-Elbow Bump*” could be a ‘thing’.
- Don’t forget the basics: handwashing and hand sanitizing.
- Take time to refresh and take breaks as needed.
- We are closely monitoring state and CDC guidelines and will modify these as needed.
- Get some good rest ahead of time, and HQ with the Tennessee and Kentucky Chapters look forward to welcoming you!



Guidelines 9.1.21