Wilderness Inquiry Policy Statement on COVID-19

Wilderness Inquiry’s core values are seeking the exceptional, paddling together, and finding a way. Furthermore, at the heart of all we do our first priority is safety. Given the industry we are in, safety means a number of things ranging from well maintained vehicles and proper loading of trailers to ergonomically correct transfers when working with individuals with mobility issues to proactively watching weather and water conditions. We are also responsible for the physical and emotional safety of our staff and participants. There are limitless risks to our organization and we do all we can in our power to mitigate those risks. With proper policies, standardized procedures, robust training, and ongoing risk management efforts we operate as safely as possible.

With the introduction of COVID-19 in 2020, we have needed to relook at what it means to operate safely as an organization. Similar to how we lean into expertise in other risk areas, we established a Safety and Inclusion Advisors group to help inform and make decisions around safety, with a particular focus around COVID-19. We continue to adapt and adjust our policies and practices as new information, research, and resources become available.

At this time, organizations are faced with decisions at the intersection of staff and participant safety, community health and responsibility, and the bottom line. As an organization that serves people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, we believe it is important that we do everything in our power to achieve our mission while keeping our participants and community at large safe.

We will follow the below practices as we make decisions around COVID-19:

- We will make decisions based on the scientific evidence as presented by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Minnesota Department of Health, and other reputable sources of information.
- We will consult with groups of local professionals and community experts and liaisons to reduce negative impacts to overall individual and community health and wellbeing, to the best of our ability.
- We will design policies and practices that keep our most vulnerable community members, including individuals with disabilities, at the forefront--staying true to our founding principles that each individual is a valued and important member of society and deserves access to opportunities.
- We will not proceed with experiences solely based on the bottom line of the organization if there is a disregard to personal or community health and safety.
- We will evaluate each program, at least quarterly, to ensure that the benefits to those being served outweigh the risks involved with participation and facilitation.
- We will do everything in our power to keep our staff, volunteers, and participants safe in environments where we work, serve, and participate.

Updated 1/21/22
We want to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative financial impact on some of our international partners and operators in particular. While we care deeply about our partners abroad and would like to support them in any way possible, we also will carefully evaluate any safety and health impacts of international travel and will hold true to our above policy that the safety of both the individual and the collective must come before the bottom line.

In closing, Wilderness Inquiry’s decisions around safety protocols related to COVID-19 will attempt to provide safe environments for all--including those who are often marginalized or are at higher risks from COVID-19. Safety, including providing safe environments that promote health and wellness, will remain a top priority.

Addendum -- Current Policies

As of January 21, 2022, our current policies which are supported by our medical consultants around masking and vaccines have been determined based on the above policy statement:

MASKS:
- Properly fitting KN95, N95, or surgical masks are required for all Wilderness Inquiry staff and participants, regardless of vaccination status, in the following situations:
  - Indoor settings connected to a Wilderness Inquiry work or program space
  - Vehicles, including Wilderness Inquiry vans or other transportation
  - During all food preparation times (indoors and outdoors)
  - Outdoors when social distancing of six feet or more cannot be maintained (including while canoeing)
  - Outdoors if an event includes 100 or more people in attendance
- Cloth masks, buffs, bandanas, and scarves are not accepted face coverings for anyone.
- If a group requires participants to be masked at all times, Wilderness Inquiry staff must also adhere to those guidelines.
- All participants should plan on bringing their own mask for any activities within close proximity such as canoeing. Wilderness Inquiry will have a few masks available if needed.

VACCINATIONS:
- Wilderness Inquiry staff are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. As of February 1, 2022, for anyone that is eligible, a booster shot is required as part of being fully vaccinated.

Updated 1/21/22
Participants are required to be *fully vaccinated* for all trips that involve an overnight experience. (This includes a booster shot for everyone that is eligible.)

**OTHER NOTES & GUIDELINES:**
- **TESTING:** Wilderness Inquiry strongly recommends COVID-19 testing prior to trip experiences in addition to protocols above with vaccination, distancing, and masking.
- **SANITIZATION:** Wilderness Inquiry will have hand sanitizer and sanitizing spray if needed during the program or trip. Participants will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before their canoeing activity begins and should always wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating.
- **SOCIAL DISTANCING:** If eating or drinking, participants should socially distance while unmasked and eating.
- **PODS:** Shared tents are a part of the Wilderness Inquiry experience. Tent pods will be assigned and remain the same throughout the duration of the trip to the extent possible.

Wilderness Inquiry will adhere to all local and federal requirements beyond the above stated policies. These policies will be continued to be monitored and updated as applicable.

*Updated 1/21/22*