BLUE Missions

Health & Hygiene Policy

For the last 12 years, the number one priority on BLUE Missions Service Trips has been the safety and health of our trip volunteers, staff, and local communities. In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, BLUE Missions has restructured our service trip protocols and guidelines to meet and exceed CDC recommendations for prevention and to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of all participants, staff and the communities we work with. This plan will be updated as new guidelines are released.

**Preparation & Training:**

* All US and Dominican Republic staff will undergo training to learn and implement updated health and hygiene practices and protocols in regard to wearing personal protective equipment, maintaining physical distance, increased cleaning, food hygiene, and community interactions.
* All participants prior to travel will receive the guidelines to follow in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses. These guidelines and protocols will also be covered during the orientation on the first day of the trip.
* Key members of the community will also partake in a training to learn and implement BLUE Missions protocols in regard to health, hygiene and community interaction.
* Cleaning and food preparation/cooking will be performed by individuals who have gone through specific training.
* For many years, we have worked with Dr. Norman Ruiz-Castaneda as our resident pediatrician who we contact if we need any recommendations on any medical situation while on our service trips. This year is no different and we will continue to contact Dr. Ruiz-Castaneda for guidance.

**Testing & Screening Prior to Travel:**

* For all spring and summer trips, we are requiring trip participants to get tested no more than 72 hours before their flight to the Dominican Republic. Volunteers must email their negative molecular test (PCR, NAAT, RT-LAMP, or antigen) before arriving to the airport for departure. Any volunteer who does not show a negative test result will not be able to travel.
  + Volunteers who get vaccinated are still required to show a negative molecular test result. With current variances of the virus there is not enough research to prove immunity from the virus after vaccination at this time.
* Trip participants are asked to limit outside exposure and monitor symptoms during the week leading to their trip.
* Any participant who is/has displayed any symptoms on travel day or 7 days before travel will not be allowed to participate on the service trip. Any participant who has a fever of 100.4 or higher during the temperature check will not be allowed to travel and participate.
* As protocols and mandates change, these guidelines will be updated to align with local and national guidelines.

**Increased Precautions:**

* Every service trip will have resources for the prevention of the virus and other illnesses. This includes face covers, hand sanitizer, soap, and cleaning supplies.
* Hand sanitizing and hand washing stations will be installed in strategic locations, including common areas and bathrooms. Soap, sanitizers, and sanitation wipes will contain at least 60% alcohol.
* All participants are required to keep their toothbrush and toiletries in their own container within their luggage.
* No sharing of items such as food utensils, cups, water bottles, or toiletries will be allowed.
* All snacks should be individually packaged per serving.
* The frequency of cleaning will be increased. High touch areas will be cleaned multiple times each day. Kitchen, eating areas, and bathrooms will be cleaned and sanitized at least 3 times a day. Cleaning will be performed by specific individuals who are trained by our staff in regard to health and hygiene standards.
* All transportation for participants will be on BLUE Missions bus or trucks or when necessary, with a private company.

**Increased Hygiene during Food Preparation & Dining:**

* All individuals involved in food preparation or serving are trained in basic food hygiene and will follow BLUE’s protocols regarding food safety and storage.
* Cooks will be required to wear face coverings and gloves when preparing all food.
* All meals are served directly to the plate with no buffet or family style method.

**Action Plan for Suspected Cases:**

* A detailed action plan (similar to the one below) is provided to all staff members for every service trip. The plan details information on actions to be taken should someone display symptoms of COVID-19.

BLUE Missions

Action Plan

**In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19,** BLUE Missions will determine the threat level of the current outbreak and take appropriate actions. These actions may include, but not be limited to, the following:

* Quarantine of affected employees, volunteers, and community members
* Cancellation of service trip, volunteer opportunity and/or in-person event

**Reduce transmission among employees**, **volunteers, and/or community members**

* + BLUE Missions has established efforts for preparing for the possibility a member in our community is diagnosed with COVID-19 or deemed a person with symptoms for coronavirus.
    - BLUE Missions will promote preventive action, such as, proper and effective hand washing.
    - Employees will be provided with cleaning wipes and products for use in living and eating quarters, bathrooms, kitchen, and high touch areas.
    - Increasing the amount of hand sanitizers available for use.
    - Preventing the spread of COVID-19 flyers will be posted through the living quarters.
  + Employees, fellows, interns, chaperones or volunteers who have symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e. fever, cough, headaches, body pains, loss of taste or smell, and/or shortness of breath) prior to the start of the trip/project should notify BLUE Missions and must stay home. These individuals will not be able to participate on the project.
  + Follow [CDC-recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html) if you are sick. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
  + Employees, fellows, interns, chaperones or volunteers should notify BLUE Missions and follow [CDC recommended precautions](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fguidance-prevent-spread.html) if they are well but have a sick family member at home. These individuals will not be able to participate on the project.

**Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection**

* + Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the office and community, such as kitchen, eating area, games, tools, bathrooms, and doorknobs.
  + If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
* When possible, employees and volunteers are discouraged from using other groupmate’s phones, tools, equipment, etc. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.

**Prevention**

* Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing and before eating.
* If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
* No contact greetings (no handshakes, hugging, kissing, etc.).
* Do not share: You should not share dishes, drinking glasses or water bottles, cups, eating utensils, towels, toiletries, snacks, bed, or bedding with other individuals.
* Wash thoroughly after use: After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

**Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if potentially infectious participant**

* Individuals who appear to have [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fsymptoms.html) (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival in the Dominican Republic or who become sick during the trip should immediately be separated from other employees, volunteers and community members.
  + The individual will undergo a COVID-19 test at the next available appointment at one of our local private laboratories in Santiago that we have partnered with.
  + If the individual tests positive and quarantine is required, BLUE Missions will coordinate the transportation of patient to a prepared quarantine room within BLUE’s office in Santiago to quarantine until the end of the trip or until they receive a negative result. If the individual shows no symptoms, another COVID-19 test will be done to ensure the individual is indeed positive and the previous result was not a false-positive.
    - The quarantine room does have access to a private bathroom and WIFI.
    - BLUE Missions will provide the individual with food and supplies, as well as privacy and protection.
  + BLUE Missions employees will monitor patient’s health, if needed, transport patient to hospital for further treatment or care. Hospital Metropolitano de Santiago (HOMS) is the hospital we would take individuals to if needed.
* If an employee or volunteer is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, BLUE Missions should inform fellow employees, volunteers and community members of their possible exposure to COVID-19 pursuant to CDC guidelines. The fellow employees and volunteers should then self-monitor for [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fsymptoms.html) (i.e. fever, cough, headaches, body pains, loss of taste or smell, and/or shortness of breath).

BLUE Missions

COVID-19 Trip Risk Assessment

BLUE Missions has outlined requirements for us to facilitate service trips in the Dominican Republic in relation to COVID-19. These requirements and protocols are updated as new guidelines are released.

Requirements for Service Trip include:

* Travel is permissible per national guidelines from your community to the country in which you are serving.
* Allowable gathering sizes of 10+. (Group size must fall within allowable gathering sizes)
* Mandatory quarantines are not required in receiving country.

Participants should be aware of the risks that will be prevalent by participating on a service trip as it relates to COVID-19. Below is a list that each participant and their parents/guardians (if applicable) should acknowledge.

* COVID-19 is a very contagious virus that spreads easily through person to person contact.
* The CDC recommends social distancing, hand washing, and the wearing of masks as a means to prevent the spread of the virus.
* COVID-19 can lead to illness, personal injury, permanent disability, and death.
* Participating in a service trip could increase the risk of contracting COVID-19.
* BLUE Missions in no way warrants that COVID-19 infection will not occur through participation in our programs.
* Individuals listed in a high-risk category by the CDC are advised to not participate without clearance from their physician.
* Participants will be traveling together and will be in close contact with the group throughout the trip.
* In the event that a traveler is refused at the airport in the Dominican Republic, any return expenses are the responsibility of the individual.
* Travelers may also have to conduct a COVID-19 rapid test at the airport if instructed by Dominican officials upon landing in the country.
* BLUE Missions participants and staff will be required to do daily temperature readings and wear a mask where required.
  + A fever reading of 100.4 or above will require isolation and possible quarantine. Please refer to Action Plan for additional details.
* Participants will be sent home at their own expense if they refuse to follow BLUE Missions instructions and protocols.

By participating in a service trip with BLUE Missions, you acknowledge that you are aware of the risks and are assuming all responsibility and liability in regards to your health and safety.