

ACTOR/STAFF COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS [February 2023]

The following COVID-19 protocols for actor and staff safety at Heartland Theatre are based on **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** guidelines. As CDC guidelines do change, please check the CDC website for the most up-to-date information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

With Board approval or by an emergency vote of the Executive Committee, these Actor/Staff Safety protocols may be adjusted to current CDC guidelines. In general it is appropriate to follow the most current CDC guidelines for COVID-19 safety.

CDC “hotline”: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

CDC Contact Us/Info page: <https://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/index.html>

The CDC recommends that people be fully vaccinated and up to date on boosters for the best protection against getting or spreading COVID-19.

A person is fully vaccinated if they received the complete required primary series at the time of vaccination. A person is partially vaccinated if they received only a part of that primary series. A person is up to date if they have received the full primary series and all the boosters available since the initial vaccination. There are different recommendations for immune-compromised people. For more information, see the CDC website, FAQ pages, et cetera. Sample page:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

Heartland Theatre strongly recommends that anyone involved in a production make a commitment to COVID-19 safety outside the theatre, as well as inside, for the duration of the rehearsal and performance period.

Current [CDC masking guidelines](#) provide different guidance for counties at different community levels for COVID-19:

- In a county with a low community level, masking is optional for all people indoors.
- In a county with a medium community level, masking is recommended for people who are immune-compromised or at high risk.
- In a county with a high community level, masking is recommended for everyone indoors, regardless of vaccination status or individual risk factors.

The **Stage Manager** can check the CDC Covid-by-county Page, updated on Thursday nights, and communicate the Low, Medium, or High status and masking requirements to cast, staff, crew, or auditioning actors at Heartland Theatre.

Covid-19 by County:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Auditions

Actors will be informed in writing of all audition safety protocols in advance (this information may be viewed on the theatre's website, via link to a document) and again upon their arrival at auditions.

Based on an actor/staff survey, Heartland Theatre will use a closed audition system to promote safety among auditioning actors and show staff. The strictness of the audition protocols allows vaccinated, unvaccinated, and partially vaccinated actors to audition, following masking and social distancing recommendations. The board may revisit the closed auditioning system as public health guidelines change.

The closed audition process will be:

- The **Stage Manager** will greet auditioning actors in the lobby and advise them of the following safety precautions:
- Auditioning actors will follow CDC masking guidelines, adapted for extra safety due to the unknown health status of all the individuals present. For Heartland this means:
 - Even if McLean County is at a low COVID-19 community level, masks are recommended for the **Director, Stage Manager** and show staff. Actors will wear masks in the lobby, hallway, and theatre, and wear clear plastic masks when onstage.
 - If McLean County is at a medium or high COVID-19 community level, masks are required for the **Director, Stage Manager**, show staff, and actors.
 - The **Stage Manager** will have a supply of disposable masks available for actors who do not have a mask with them.
 - The **Stage Manager** will provide clear plastic masks for the actual audition, so the **Director** can see the actors' faces. Actors should keep these masks for a potential return to the theatre for a second night of auditions or callbacks. Actors should please clean these masks with a disinfectant wipe, and allow to air dry overnight.

- To the extent possible, auditioning actors should maintain social distancing of 6 feet or more, both while they are waiting to audition and while they are auditioning.
- The **Stage Manager** will present the auditioning actors with the audition form. The audition form will contain COVID-related statements and questions.
- The **Director** and **Stage Manager** will take the following steps regarding the answers to these questions:
 - They may consider the auditioning actors' answers to the COVID-19 questions as one factor in casting, but not the only factor.
 - For privacy reasons, they must NOT:
 - Ask anyone **WHY** they answered any questions the way they did.
 - Disclose anyone's answers during the audition process, or afterward, without express permission.
 - Capture evidence of anyone's vaccination status – e.g., photo or copy.
- Prior to auditions, and following the procedures outlined above, the **Artistic Director** will collect vaccination information from the **Director**, **Designers**, and all other staff assigned to the production.
- Show staff, including the **Director**, **Stage Manager**, and anyone else present on behalf of Heartland such as the **Artistic Director** or a board member, will follow [CDC masking guidelines](#) during the entire audition.
- The **Stage Manager** will call auditioning actors into the theatre to audition. Any actor not called will remain in the lobby or hallway.
 - Actors may be called individually, in pairs, or in groups, depending on the requirements of the scene. The **Director** should make every effort to limit the number of auditioning actors present in the theatre at any given time.
 - Any scene involving multiple actors should be socially distanced for the purpose of auditioning. The **Stage Manager** will remind actors to sit or stand at an appropriate distance from each other.
 - The **Stage Manager** will take all reasonable steps to increase ventilation in the theatre during auditions. This may include opening doors, turning on fans, and keeping the HVAC fan on.
- If desired, the **Director** may gather at the end of an evening of auditions, or at a callback audition, a smaller group of actors still being considered for roles, and invite them into the theatre to witness auditions and be more

easily at hand. In this case, actors would essentially become audience members as well as actors, **wearing regular masks** while seated and changing to **clear masks** when called to the stage. This accommodates the actor/staff safety protocols for non-vaccinated or partially vaccinated actors (see below) as well as the patron/volunteer safety protocols requiring the audience to be masked.

Covid-19 masking guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Rehearsals and Performances:

Depending on the COVID-19 vaccination status of the **Director, Stage Manager**, cast and crew, there will be two different protocols for rehearsals and performance.

Fully Vaccinated Director, Stage Manager, Cast and Crew

In accordance with [CDC masking guidelines](#), the protocols for rehearsals and performances for a show where the **Director, Stage Manager**, and entire cast are fully vaccinated cast will be:

- At the first rehearsal, the **Stage Manager** should ask all cast members for proof of their vaccination status and take a note that their vaccination status has been checked. For reasons of health privacy, the **Stage Manager** should NOT take photos or make photocopies of anyone's documents.
- At the first rehearsal, the **Stage Manager** should confirm that actors understand they will need to be tested the week of each performance and share their results with Heartland Theatre.
- To the extent possible, the **Director** should block the show with distance between actors, while realizing that some scenes will require actors to be in close proximity.
- Masking protocols during rehearsals will follow [CDC masking guidelines](#). For Heartland this means:
 - If McLean County is at a low COVID-19 community level, masks are optional for the **Director, Stage Manager**, show staff, and cast
 - If McLean County is at a medium or high COVID-19 community level, masks are required for the **Director, Stage Manager**, show staff, and cast

- Masking protocols during performances will follow [CDC masking guidelines](#), with some additional safety precautions:
 - The **Stage Manager** and all crew members will be masked.
 - Actors will follow [CDC masking guidelines](#).
 - If McLean County is at a low COVID-19 community level, masks are optional for the cast. Actors' masks during performances should be clear plastic. If there has been an infection or exposure incident (see below), the actors, **Director**, **Stage Manager**, and **Artistic Director** should consult, and may decide to use clear masks for actors even at low community level.
 - If McLean County is at a medium or high COVID-19 community level, masks are required for the cast. Actors' masks during performances should be clear plastic.
- If, after a performance, actors or any show staff talk with audience members, they will move to the front lobby and wear regular (not clear plastic) masks.

Non-Vaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Director, Stage Manager, Cast or Crew

These are the safety protocols for rehearsals and performances where the **Director**, **Stage Manager**, and/or any individual member of the cast is partially vaccinated, unvaccinated, or has not indicated their vaccination status:

- Rehearsals will take place with actors and show staff masked at all times. If an actor who has been cast refuses to wear a mask, the actor will be let go and replaced.
- Performances will take place with actors and show staff masked at all times.
- Artistic staff understand and accept that the mask requirement may require creative staging, design, and interpretive choices. Actors will need to project through mask material. Actors should provide their own fresh/clean rehearsal masks, but clear, see-through performance masks will be provided, along with cleaning and drying materials and instructions.
- If, after a performance, actors or any show staff talk with audience members, they will move to the front lobby and wear regular masks (not clear plastic).
- If, during the rehearsal or performance process, the vaccination status of this group changes so that the **Director**, **Stage Manager**, and entire cast becomes fully vaccinated, the “fully vaccinated” protocols may be adopted at that time. As the CDC recommends that people be fully vaccinated and up

to date with boosters, to avoid getting or spreading COVID-19, Heartland Theatre also strongly recommends this for its productions.

COVID-19 Protocols That Apply to Both “Fully Vaccinated” and “Non-Vaccinated” Scenarios

- **Actor/Staff Hygiene:** Wash hands with soap frequently for 20 seconds each time. Use hand sanitizer only if sink & soap are unavailable at time of need.
- **Airflow/Circulation:** Keep HVAC fan ON during rehearsals and work times. Turn OFF fans and thermostat to AUTO following rehearsals and/or work times. In appropriate weather conditions, back doors to the theatre may be left open during rehearsals and construction/strike to circulate fresh air.
- **Backstage Staff:** Backstage staff will be masked for performances. This includes **running crew**, the **Stage Manager (SM)** and **Assistant Stage Manager (ASM)**, and any design or artistic staff who are present backstage for performances. During rehearsals, backstage staff will follow [CDC masking guidelines](#). The **ASM** can and should assist the **SM** in reminding anyone backstage to wear a mask.
- **Testing and Tracking Procedures:** The **Stage Manager** will keep track of testing and isolation dates as part of rehearsal and performance reports. They should create an ongoing document for this purpose, accessible by relevant theatre and artistic staff, for oversight purposes, respecting health privacy. The **Stage Manager** should never share names or health information without permission of the person. While the **Stage Manager** is responsible for communication and tracking, the **Artistic Director** is responsible for enforcement of Actor/Staff Safety protocols.
- **Actor/Staff Concerns:** Actors and staff should report discomfort with rehearsal or performance conditions or safety protocols to 1) **Stage Manager** 2) the **Artistic Director** 3) a **Board Member** or 4) anyone at Heartland Theatre with whom the person feels most comfortable.

Covid-19 Screening Testing Program

COVID-19 testing will be required of **cast** and **crew** the week of each performance on a schedule determined and tracked by the **Stage Manager**.

Screening tests are intended to identify people with COVID-19 who are asymptomatic and do not have known, suspected, or reported exposure to SARS-

CoV-2. Screening helps to identify unknown cases so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/sars-cov2-testing-strategies.html>

COVID-19 testing should be conducted by a third party so cast and crew are able to show results to the **Stage Manager**. If a cast or crew member is unable to get a third party test, a home COVID-19 test is acceptable, if taken at the theatre with at least one representative of the theatre as a witness (e.g., **Stage Manager, Managing Director, Artistic Director, Board Member**) so that the theatre is able to verify the results. (In the case of a COVID-19 infection, the antigen/home test is best; see below.)

COVID-19 testing may also be required during the rehearsal process, as often as necessary, based on circumstances that apply, such as infection or exposure.

COVID-19 Infection Among Cast or Crew

In case of a COVID infection among the cast or crew, the person who tests positive should follow CDC guidelines for isolation, and the others, if exposed, should follow CDC guidelines for exposure. Check the CDC website regularly or call the hotline for advice or any updates to the guidelines.

In general, the person who tests positive should stay home (isolate) for a full 5 days and wear a high-quality, close-fitting mask for 5 more days upon return to rehearsal. The person who has no symptoms may return after 5 days; the person with symptoms may return after 5 days if fever-free (without medication) for a full 24 hours. If symptoms persist or get worse, the person should get appropriate medical help, and the theatre will make other arrangements for the production. If the person feels better, and remains fever- and symptom-free, they may continue in the production. As a third-party PCR test would likely still remain positive, the person should use the antigen/home test for the required weekly testing; the CDC permits people to return to work, if masked, without requiring a negative test. To remove the mask, the person should have two negative antigen tests 48 hours apart.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

In general, the people who were exposed should wear a high-quality, close-fitting mask for 10 days, and get tested after the first 5 days. (Consider yourself exposed if you were closer than 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes to a person who was

carrying the COVID-19 virus.) The CDC website provides an Isolation & Exposure calculator for help with this timing, and the **Stage Manager** should make this available to cast, staff, and crew as needed.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html>

If an exposed person tests positive or develops symptoms, they should follow the appropriate CDC guidelines for COVID-19. If an exposed person tests negative after 5 days, and again 48 hours later, the masking is still recommended but not absolutely necessary.

On a case-by-case basis, the **Director**, **Artistic Director**, or **Stage Manager** may contact the CDC directly to work out the best solution for any COVID-19 health-safety situation at hand. These three staff members should communicate regularly throughout the situation. The **Director**, **Artistic Director**, or **Stage Manager** should also feel free to contact a board member for advice or support.

If the **Director** contracts COVID-19, the **Artistic Director** will work with the **Director** to determine how to proceed.

Curtain Speech

The curtain speech should communicate important audience safety protocols and any applicable actor-masking requirements before every performance. If the **Artistic Director** is not available to give the curtain speech, a substitute may stand in, using the same script. The **Artistic Director** writes or outlines the script and posts it in the box office. The **Artistic Director** and **Managing Director** should communicate about this speech to suit the circumstances, accommodating updates or changes to either the Actor/Staff Safety protocols or the Patron/Volunteer Safety protocols, as they are chairs of these respective committees. In general, there should be good common-sense consistency between the safety protocols of these two committees.

Communication & History

The **Artistic Director** and **Managing Director**, as a team, should clearly communicate these Actor/Staff Safety protocols to the **Director** and artistic staff at production meetings in advance of auditions and rehearsals, emphasizing their importance to the sustainability of the theatre. “The show must go on,” but it can’t if people are out sick. If desired, the **AD** and **MD** may invite a board member to

production meetings to help with this. The **Stage Manager** should communicate safety protocols to actors and director at auditions and to cast, staff, and crew at rehearsals and performances, assisted by the **Assistant Stage Manager**, if provided, or a board member, if desired. The **AD** should communicate the Heartland Theatre safety protocols to artistic staff at the time of hiring, as well.

These Actor/Staff Safety protocols emerged from the ReStart Heartland committees created by then Board President John Bowen to get Heartland Theatre open again during the pandemic in the safest and most sustainable way possible. Heartland Theatre requires all actors, directors, designers, and crew to strictly adhere to these protocols. Failure to abide by these guidelines may result in the individual being asked to leave the production. The protocols can and should be adapted and updated to align with local and CDC public health requirements. They should also be compatible and consistent with Patron/Volunteer Safety protocols at Heartland Theatre, as well as advice from the Financial Sustainability ReStart Heartland committee.