



2021 IRF EDUCATION INVITATIONAL CASE STUDY



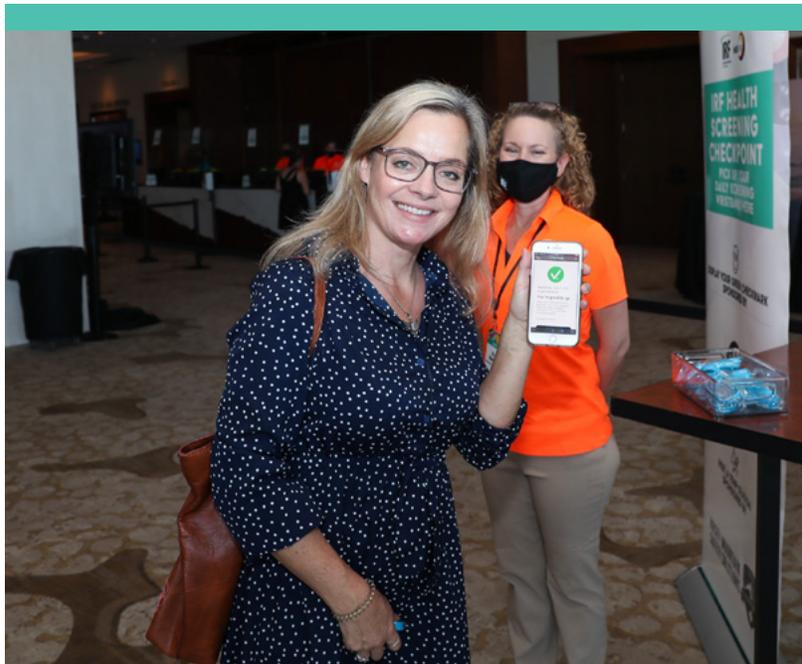
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Health & Safety Protocols Lead to COVID-Free Event

A Case Study on the 2021 IRF Educational Invitational

From the very beginning of the planning process for the 2021 IRF Education Invitational, health & safety protocols were a driving factor in every decision for this 500-person live event scheduled for June 2-5, 2021. As vaccinations became more accessible and CDC guidelines became less restrictive, the IRF continuously revised the program design and health & safety protocols for the Invitational.



Health & Safety Partners

With the health & safety of attendees top of mind, the IRF expanded its capabilities by forming partnerships with businesses that specialize in critical health & safety services. Given that the host hotel was a key partner, an enhanced site inspection was operated to observe hotel protocols and ensure alignment between IRF-desired protocols and the hotel's readiness to deliver on those requirements. Fortunately, the JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort was prepared to go above and beyond their own protocols to match those requested by the IRF. Additional health & safety partners included:

- ***Vital Circle***
Secure collection and verification of documentation including proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test, daily symptom tracking surveys, proximity contact tracing devices



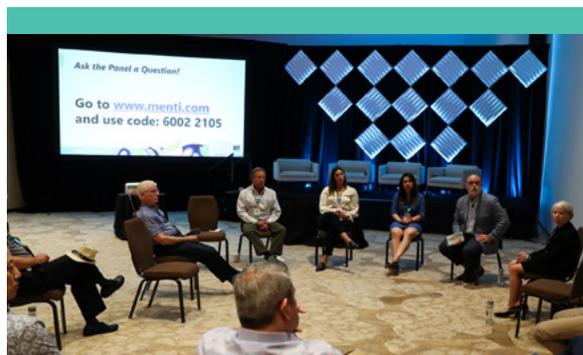
- **Rocky Mountain Safety Solutions**
Contactless thermal “Temp Stations”
- **InHouse Physicians**
Healthcare Clinic with a dedicated on-call clinician, Rapid Molecular COVID-19 Testing
- **Evolutionary Events**
Dedicated Health & Safety Officers, performing daily health screenings



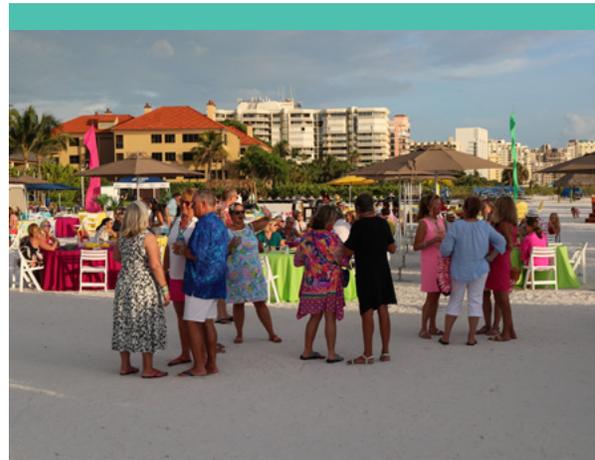
Pre-Event Planning

The multiple considerations around program design and distancing included:

- **Spacing and Room Set Ups**
Additional space required to maintain proper distancing. Rounds seated five in the main ballroom, and theater-style seating (with a minimum of three feet between chairs) was used in breakout rooms. Larger spaces were utilized to accommodate the spacing.
- **Attendee Flow**
Attention was paid to flow to avoid creating any funnels that would force people close together. Signage reminding people to keep space, as well as Health & Safety Officers were used to direct a safer attendee flow between sessions and events.
- **Networking**
A primary goal for attendees is networking. Events were placed outside wherever possible to allow for conversation and space.
- **Education**
Roundtable discussions were considered, but abandoned due to spacing, concerns about ambient noise for masked attendees creating limitations on the ability to have conversations. Sessions were instead held as panels with the ability to submit questions via Menti. Pre-registration for sessions was also required to manage room capacities. Wait lists were used outside the room to allow for last minute session shifts and were managed on a space-available basis.



- **Food & Beverage Service**
Pre-event, attendees were provided with the opportunity to choose meals in their room if they were not comfortable in a group setting. Only about a dozen individuals chose the in-room meal option. All meal set-ups included staffed buffets or individually plated options aligned to hotel food service protocols. Dining set-ups were all mindful of distancing with rounds seating no more than five. Events were held outdoors where possible.



During the Event

Quickly shifting regulations at the federal, state/local and hotel level led to a decision to shift our mask policy just prior to the event. The new policy aligned with the health & safety protocols of the JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort, which were consistent with CDC and American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) Safe Stay Guidelines.

This new policy meant fully vaccinated attendees were not required to wear a mask. Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated attendees were asked to wear masks at indoor events. While not the primary driver, the mask policy decision was also informed by the percentage of our attendees that were fully vaccinated as reported by Vital Circle. 89.3% of Invitational attendees were fully vaccinated (including the two-week post-injection wait period) prior to the start of the event. All others had presented a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days of the event start.



Communication to all attendees regarding the mask protocol shift was immediate. Signage, speaking notes and reminders about masking, presentation templates with reminders and more were all updated prior to the event kick-off. In comments during General Session, attendees were reminded of the policies and reminded that vaccinated attendees were welcome to wear masks if they desired. The goal was to ensure safety and comfort, making it a “judgment free” zone.

All other health & safety protocols remained in place. Therefore, daily health screenings, proximity contact tracing, and temperature checks became even more important. Attendees were overwhelmingly grateful for the mask policy shift and complied with the remaining protocols. Representative feedback included:

- “Hotel and IRF did a great job of pivoting last minute. Impressed.”
- “I felt very confident that maximum effort was made to ensure our safety.”
- “I’m glad the restrictions were lessened since we need to set the expectation that meetings in person can happen.”
- “Impressive and gave me enormous confidence to have the team paying attention.”



Post-Event Follow-up

To ensure we were aware of any post-event health concerns, Vital Circle sent health surveys to all attendees at 5, 10, and 21-days following the event. No attendees reported any red-flag symptoms, illness, or positive COVID-19 test. At the 25-day mark, our health & safety partner, Vital Circle, deleted the names associated with the event and archived other data in alignment with their privacy policies.

“Since the IRF Education Invitational was one the first industry events of 2021, we were excited to set the example for the industry. The IRF is so proud of how our partners, staff and attendees each did their part to help us have a safe event... and get back to business. The 2021 Invitational was an important step toward the widespread return to meetings, events, and conferences,” said Kari Vrba, IRF Chair.