



## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many important ways in which the arts, artists, and arts organizations are critical to individual and collective health, as well as to the global response to the pandemic. The role of the arts in facilitating health communication and enhancing the wellbeing of communities and individuals is well documented<sup>1</sup>. To support the work of the arts community in these efforts, this advisory was developed to guide location of reliable, credible information relevant to issues of health and safety in arts policy and practice. It is a part of Performing Public Health, an initiative within the UF Center for Arts in Medicine's COVID-19 Arts Response that considers both the crucial cultural measures needed to slow the spread of COVID-19, and the various ways artists perform culture-making in response to it.

### Performing Public Health: the various ways artists perform culture-making in response to COVID-19

Prioritizing health and safety may significantly constrain typical activities and practices for communities, businesses, churches, artists, educators, and others. Historically and currently, limitations can set the stage for creativity and innovation. Artists are uniquely skilled in problem-solving and in finding new ways for meaning-making and connection. This is evidenced by the depth and breadth of artists' responses found in the [UF COVID-19 Arts Response Repository](#), in the many innovative adaptations chronicled in the Remote Cultures initiative, and in the examples provided in the COVID-19 Arts Response's local, state, and national advisory briefs and [Call for Collaboration](#).

## USING THE ARTS IN COVID-19 RESPONSES

There is growing evidence that supports use of the arts in public health and in epidemic response.<sup>2,3</sup> And, as noted above, artists and arts organizations have stepped up in highly impactful ways to enhance and amplify efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic and to slow the spread of COVID-19. In these efforts, it is critical that artists and arts organizations use and convey reliable, credible information related to health and safety.

Artists are uniquely positioned to aid in the dissemination of public health information. Whereas government and public health officials may be viewed with skepticism, artists are generally perceived as non-threatening peers and are often influencers in communities. The Ebola crisis in West Africa demonstrated how [the arts](#) can be an ideal mechanism for the rapid and effective delivery of complex health information. In addition to assisting with direct dissemination of public health information, artists can influence behaviors by modeling best public health practices in their own work. See the [COVID-19 Arts Response Repository](#) for more examples of how the arts are being used in health communication campaigns.



## ADVISORY BRIEF

### USE RELIABLE AND CREDIBLE EVIDENCE

Due to the rapid evolution of the scientific knowledge on the COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2) virus, it is important for artists and arts administrators to stay abreast of the most current information from credible sources. Guidelines may change as new evidence is uncovered. Because the virus can cause severe illness in all age groups, artists must be vigilant to protect themselves and the public.<sup>4,5</sup> Partnership with local public health entities or utilization of current information from primary national public health sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is critical in artist responses to COVID-19.

It is recommended that artists begin by reviewing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) page, which includes information about [symptoms](#), a [self-check tool](#) to help make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care, as well as [testing](#), [how to protect yourself and others](#), [how the virus spreads](#), [cloth face covers](#), and [frequently asked questions](#). The CDC also offers guidance for those with suspected or confirmed exposure to COVID-19, [public health guidance for community-related exposure](#), and for those [sick or caring for someone at home](#).

As stay-at-home requirements loosen, there are many considerations for reopening arts programs. The CDC's downloadable pdf, [Resuming Business TOOLKIT](#) includes useful checklists for administrators and employers, and links to 42 topic-specific resources, many applicable to community artists and arts managers. In addition to following state and local guidelines and COVID-19 prevalence information, the [CDC Guide to Reopening](#) includes information for schools, businesses, childcare programs, and employers with workers at high risk.

See [Appendix A](#) for additional [Infection Control Recommendations for Artists](#) with links to supporting documentation.

### LOCATING CREDIBLE SOURCES

Finding credible evidence to support policy decisions is particularly challenging due to the rapidly changing science and politically-charged issues related to the national response. Furthermore, many peer-reviewed journal articles are only available with a paid subscription. Sources of credible information may be found by searching [Open Access Databases](#) such as the Listing of [Open Access Databases - LOADB](#) or [DOAJ \(Directory of Open Access Journals\)](#).



## ADVISORY BRIEF

### THESE CONSIDERATIONS CAN ASSIST IN DETERMINING RELIABILITY:

- Journal articles that are published in peer-reviewed journals, i.e. reviewed by other experts, are generally reliable. But all publications can be biased due to the subject matter that they accept and the focus of the journal.
- Newspapers and news programs may have credible information. When determining reliability, check the sources of information identified in the news article or story. Locate the original source to determine credibility.
- Government websites (.gov) are typically reliable.
- University websites (.edu) are generally reliable.
- Hospital/Medical Center websites (which may end in .gov, .edu, .com, or .org) are usually reliable.
- Look for stated and/or implied conflicts of interest.
- Websites promoting products (normally .com or .org) may be biased.
- Special interest websites commonly promote a specific agenda.

See Appendix B: Finding Reliable Information

### EXAMPLES OF CREDIBLE SOURCES

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#)

[Mayo Clinic: Coronavirus Disease](#)

[PubMed, Public Database of Medical Research](#)

[New England Journal of Medicine Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#)

[World Health Organization](#)



## ADVISORY BRIEF

### CONSIDER MENTAL HEALTH AND DELIVER TRAUMA-INFORMED PROGRAMMING

The COVID-19 health crisis has changed many facets of daily life for people around the world. Artists and their program participants may experience anxiety, trauma, and grief. The arts are shown to impact mood and behavior; during times of crisis, the emotional response can be intensified. Therefore, artists have a responsibility to be mindful of their own and others' heightened vulnerability and to create programs that foster resilience. The UF Center for Arts in Medicine's Arts Facilitation During COVID-19 [InfoGraphic](#) offers insight and recommendations for artists working in communities during the pandemic.

### CONSIDER THOSE MORE VULNERABLE TO THE VIRUS

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness of inequities and disparities across systems in the United States, including in healthcare, public health, and the arts. Consideration of these inequities and of those more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and impacts is vital to safe, socially responsive, and effective art responses.

For programs that include face-to-face interactions, extra precautions may be needed for people and groups at higher risk for illness and mortality. People who are over 65, pregnant, living with disabilities, in institutional or communal settings, experiencing homelessness, or living in densely populated areas may be at particular risk. Additionally, Black, African American, Hispanic, Latinx, Native American, Indigenous, and other communities affected by social disparities have been found to be at higher risk.<sup>6,7</sup>

For more information, see our [Unique Precarities](#) page.

### ENGAGE CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Impactful arts + public health programs build on local community knowledge, histories, strengths, and partnerships. They center community members, equity, and the social determinants of health, recognizing that progress toward reducing the spread of COVID-19 and its impacts will require disruption of systemic structures that limit health and perpetuate inequities and disparities. Partnerships that leverage broader disciplinary and cultural insights and collaborators from sectors such as education, urban planning, mental health, government, community development, healthcare, and the arts are needed to address the complexities of COVID-19's toll on our communities.

The [Creating Healthy Communities through Cross-sector Collaboration](#) white paper offers examples and recommendations for leveraging cross-sector collaboration that can strengthen COVID-19 arts responses. This resource recognizes that arts and culture have always been at the forefront of social movements, and that the United States is once again in the midst of dramatic social upheaval and change. As we find ourselves in the midst of heightened dialogue and debate around issues at the core of our collective health and wellbeing, this advisory seeks to guide responsive and responsible arts-based efforts to support health and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the United States.



## ADVISORY BRIEF

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