HAWAI‘I DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH LAUNCHES NEW SAFE GATHERINGS CAMPAIGN IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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HONOLULU — The holiday season is a time for celebrations and parties with family, friends and co-workers, but large gatherings are the primary cause of COVID-19 clusters. To demonstrate how to gather safely with ‘ohana, friends, and co-workers, the Hawai‘i Department of Health has produced a new campaign called “How to Gather. For Real.” The campaign offers practical guidance that is consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Two public service announcements — one focusing on gatherings with family and friends and the other on workplace gatherings —began airing this week on TV, radio, online, in print, and on social media. These messages will continue through the end of the year.

“The public service announcements depict real-life scenarios and tips that we can all use to gather and interact with others in a safer way,” said Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Char. “We urge the public to follow these practices and help us reduce the spread of COVID-19.”

A statewide survey and focus groups conducted on O‘ahu in August found that most people are aware of the guidance on wearing masks, physical distancing, and avoiding large gatherings. But many have difficulty implementing the guidelines when it comes to getting together with others.

To help drive the message home, the Department of Health enlisted the support of local personalities:

Chelei Kahalewai provides tips about celebrating her aunty’s birthday in a new way in the first spot. She is a content creator, known as @alohaitschelei on social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok. She has gained thousands of fans with video clips that range from comedy sketches to real-life stories and dancing. “I wanted to help spread awareness about safety in group settings during COVID and felt this was a great opportunity to do that,” Kahalewai said. “I just feel that it is important everyone stays safe and healthy during this pandemic.”

The other spot about safe workplace gatherings features **Daryl Bonilla**, an actor and stand-up comedian who enjoys entertaining audiences with his local-style humor. “I liked using light local

humor to help encourage people to continue to practice physical distancing and cleanliness while still maintaining some semblance of normalcy," Bonilla said. "It is a rewarding privilege to assist the DOH in spreading this essential message."

While the new guidelines help make gatherings safer, it is important to remember that virtual celebrations still pose the lowest risk for spread. Hawai'i residents should pay careful attention to COVID-19 levels in their community and use the following guidance to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees at gatherings:

- **Number of COVID-19 cases:** Consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases on your island or in your community when planning a gathering. This information is updated daily at HawaiiCOVID19.com (http://hawaiicovid19.com) .

- **Location:** Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings. Plan for outdoor events or leave doors and windows open.

- **Duration:** The longer the event, the more risk of exposure. Consider having shorter celebrations.

- **The number of invitees:** Gatherings with more people pose more risk than those with fewer people. Keep a distance of at least six feet apart from those who are not from the same household.

- **Out-of-state guests:** A negative pre-travel COVID-19 test from trusted testing and travel partners or an FDA-approved test after arrival with the required quarantine helps reduce spread in the islands. Still, gatherings with attendees from outside Hawai'i may pose a higher risk than gatherings with attendees who live in the same area.

- **Behaviors:** Gatherings with attendees who do not engage in preventive behaviors such as maintaining a physical distance of least six feet, wearing masks, or washing hands often pose more risk than gatherings with attendees who follow preventive behaviors.

The "How to Gather. For Real" public service announcements can be viewed at HawaiiCOVID19.com/resources. For more information on how to gather safely, visit HawaiiCOVID19.com/safe-gatherings and HawaiiCOVID19.com/workplace-guidance (http://hawaiicovid19.com/workplace-guidance) for workplace guidance.

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PDF: Hawai'i Department of Health launches new safe gatherings campaign in time for the holidays