

Supporting Individual Risk Assessment During COVID-19

Many individual states and localities have loosened or eliminated mitigation measures as the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved. Individuals who wish to mitigate their risk of contracting COVID-19 must decide on effective strategies in environments that may have returned to pre-pandemic norms. They must assess their level of risk and risk tolerance amid different mitigation measures, regulations, and metrics across states and localities. The public is also exposed to misinformation and disinformation through social and mainstream media—all occurring within a politically polarized environment. The latest consultation from the Societal Experts Action Network provides actionable guidance for decision makers seeking to help members of the public make their own and others' risk assessments related to COVID-19.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR COVID-19

BUILD TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Transparency is essential to building trust in public health officials, evidence, and recommendations. It requires candor about the limits to existing knowledge and the likelihood that it will change as the pandemic continues to evolve.

FOSTER AUTONOMY AND EMPOWERMENT

Public health officials must recognize and respect individuals' autonomy in making decisions for themselves and their families. Empowering that autonomy means making the information people need to exercise it authoritative, comprehensible, and accessible.

HONOR PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS AND PERSONAL STORIES

Public health officials must acknowledge the deep emotions and practical challenges that can accompany

the decisions individuals are now asked to make. They can demonstrate their concern by hearing personal stories and translating scientific information into terms relevant to individual decisions.

ENCOURAGE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Individuals will be and will feel less alone if they make these decisions as part of a community. Public health officials can foster public engagement by partnering with trusted community organizations that support two-way communications, helping to convey health information and hear individuals' needs.

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