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**Introduction & Ground Rules \_\_\_ Minutes**

**Purpose: Look at Alternative Approaches to the Issue and Hear Different Points of View**

* This is not a debate; we’re not here to “win” an argument.
* We’ll look carefully at alternative approaches—all of them with trade-offs and drawbacks.
* At the close of the forum, we’ll reflect on what we’ve heard, looking for common ground, but also recognizing remaining areas of uncertainty or tension.
* We’ll try to think about what matters most to us and what we are willing to give up or where we might compromise to make progress.

**My Role: Serve as Impartial Facilitator**

* I’m here to help us have a conversation. I’ll encourage everyone to be deliberative and consider different viewpoints.
* I’ll watch the time to ensure we talk about all the options and have time for reflections at the end.
* From time to time, I may point to specific questions and ideas in the guide, especially if they represent voices not in the room or trade-offs we haven’t talked about.
* This is your conversation. Please talk to and listen to each other.

**Structure: The Four Parts of a Deliberative Forum**

* Ground Rules
* Personal Stake
* Deliberating on the Options: Option 1, Option 2, Option 3
* Closing Reflections

**Ground Rules: \_\_\_ Minutes**

**Some sample ground rules used by forum moderators.**

* Listen to other voices. Listening is as important as speaking.
* Consider each approach fairly, looking at its benefits and its trade-offs.
* Keep an open mind. Avoid coming to conclusions until we’ve deliberated on all the options.
* Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one or two individuals should dominate.
* It’s okay to disagree, but do so with curiosity, not hostility. Learning more about how others think is one of the most interesting parts of a forum.
* Are there additional ground rules we would like to add?
* Do we all agree to follow these ground rules and hold one another accountable to them?

**Personal Stake: Some questions that be helpful \_\_\_ Minutes**

* Why did you come out to the forum today?
* What aspect of the issue concerns you most?
* How has this issue affected you, your family, or your community?
* When you think about this issue, what bothers you?
* How does this problem impact the things in your life and community that are important to you?

**Questions for Deliberation—Option 1: Preserve Individual Choice \_\_\_ Minutes**

Our society prizes personal freedom, and nothing is more personal than deciding what we are willing to put in our bodies. Requiring a vaccine would be an encroachment on that freedom. It is vital that we protect people’s right to make their own medical decisions, even if there might be a risk in the decision they make.

BUT: The more unvaccinated people there are, the more risk to others and the greater danger there is that more dangerous versions of the virus will emerge.

* This option bars employers from requiring employees to be vaccinated. Personal freedom is important. But should there be any exceptions—perhaps for employees in nursing homes with many frail residents or hospital workers?
* Some who oppose this option worry it will lead to much lower vaccination rates for all diseases, including childhood diseases that are almost unknown today because of vaccines. Is a wider rejection of vaccines a possibility? Would this be acceptable to us if it happened?

**Questions for Deliberation—Option 2: Get Everyone Vaccinated \_\_\_ Minutes**

When it comes to public health, our community needs to make sensible decisions for the greater good. Vaccines against measles, polio, and other diseases, have saved countless lives and reduced suffering. COVID-19 is no different. We should use whatever means available, either incentives or employer requirements, to get shots into as many arms as possible.

BUT: This is highly intrusive on people’s freedom to choose what goes into their bodies and many of these steps create two classes of people—the vaccinated and unvaccinated.

* People who fear the COVID vaccines or don’t trust healthcare officials could lose their jobs under this option. Is that really fair? Why or why not?
* We give up some freedoms to ensure airline and traffic safety but going through a metal detector and/or wearing a seat belt or helmet (for motorcycles) is far less intrusive and long-lasting than taking a vaccine. Do we really want to require vaccinations for some adults and children, or could this backfire and just divide our community? Are there other ways to encourage vaccination that would work just as well?

**Questions for Deliberation—Option 3: Protect the Vulnerable \_\_\_ Minutes**

In many communities, it seems clear that the rate of vaccinations isn’t going to rise much more. Therefore, we should focus our efforts on practical steps that will protect the most vulnerable people in our community: people of color, the elderly, the immune-compromised, and the poor. In the long-term interest of public \ welfare we need to accept the existence of COVID-19 and get on with our lives.

BUT: Essentially giving up on vaccinations increases the risk of contagion and more dangerous variants and may trigger future outbreaks and resulting lockdowns. And we shouldn’t kid ourselves—and most vulnerable will pay the price.

* Mask mandates are hard to enforce and force teachers and front-line workers into being “the mask police.” Should we ease up and let people use their own judgment on masks, even if it risks spreading more dangerous forms of COVID? Or should we rely on security personnel and law enforcement if needed, along with hefty fines, to push people to follow a law that protects us all?
* Extensive testing, quarantining, and contact tracing are very disruptive to education, and contact tracing can be threatening and invasive for families where some are undocumented. Isn’t requiring and promoting vaccines actually a much less intrusive option—one that’s been shown to save lives?

**Closing Reflections \_\_\_ Minutes**

Acting on the ideas and proposals here will affect everyone in our community, and many are controversial and emotional for some people. It’s important to look carefully at each of the specific actions and how they will work in our community—in our schools, places of business, churches, and other gathering places.

* Thinking about the various ideas we’ve covered, will they help protect our community, or is there a chance they will backfire and divide us. How do we help those who will be afraid, no matter which way we go? What is our responsibility to them?
* As we deliberated here today, did we hear enough different perspectives and considerations from the various parts of our community—people in business, healthcare, education, faith leaders, and those who live in different parts of our community? Are we ready to make judgments, or do we need to include more people in this deliberation?
* Considering what we support personally is only step one. What are the areas where we may need to compromise or make accommodations so we can go forward?
* We can all act to protect ourselves—by getting or not getting the vaccine as we see fit. But what obligations do we have to others? To children and younger people, for example? To people who may be especially vulnerable, such as cancer patients? To people whose jobs give them less choice about what they do?
* Beyond the question of how our community approaches the COVID vaccines, are there other areas where we need to have conversations like this—conversation that look at options and promote an open mind about them, conversations where we weigh the wide range of benefits and drawbacks?

**Other important questions to consider:**

* Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn’t considered before?
* Can you now identify any shared concerns or hopes we have discovered in our conversation?
* How has what you heard in the forum affected your thinking?
* Can you identify any tensions that came up during the deliberations?
* What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?
* What could you do as an individual to improve both the physical and social health of our community?
* What could you do if you worked with others in the community?
* And what changes do we want our elected officials at the local and state government to make?